



MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY

(University with Potential for Excellence)

DISTANCE EDUCATION



B.A. (English)

Third Year

PAPER - V

AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Syllabus

III B.A. ENGLISH

Paper V : American Literature

Prose (Detailed)

Emerson : The American Scholar

Non – Detailed

Edgar Allan Poe : Philosophy of Composition

Thoreau : Civil Disobedience

Henry James : Art of Fiction

Poetry (Detailed)

Edgar Allan Poe : The Raven

Whitman : Passage to India

Dickinson : a) Because I could not stop for Death

b) I felt a funeral in my brain

c) The bird came down the walk

d) The Soul selects her own society

Frost : Mending Wall

Non-Detailed

Lowell : Walking in the Blue

Wallace Stevens : Emperor of the Ice-cream

E.E.Cummings : Balloon Man

Whitman : Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

Drama (Detailed)

Tennessee Williams : Glass Menagerie

Non-Detailed

Arthur Miller : Death of a Salesman

Fiction (Non-Detailed)

Hawthorne : The Scarlet Letter

Hemingway : Oldman and the Sea

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Unit 1

THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR

Space for Hints

-R.W. EMERSON

1.1 Introduction

Ralph Waldo Emerson was an American essayist, lecturer, and poet, who led the Transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century. He was seen as a champion of individualism and a prescient critic of the countervailing pressures of society. 'The American Scholar' is considered to be one of the most elusive speeches written and delivered to a graduating class. Emerson presented his speech to the graduating men Phi Beta Kappa Society of Cambridge University on August 31, 1837. In his speech, he addressed three basic ideas of literature, scholastic function and Nature. Emerson transforms a conventional occasion into a manifesto for American young men of promise to become 'Man Thinking' to trust their own individuality and as scholar to act as representatives of a noble standard to their nation and their world. It is said that Emerson's audience responded as if a prophet had spoken.

1.2 Unit Objectives

- Emerson as an architect of American Culture
- *The American Scholar* as an expression of Emerson's Transcendentalism

1.3 Unit Structure

1.1 Introduction

1.2 Unit Objectives

1.3 Unit Structure

1.4 Life and Works

1.5 Emerson as a writer

1.6 Central thought of *The American Scholar*

1.7 Meanings and References

1.8 The Scholar's duties

1.9 Influence of books on the scholar

1.10 Influence of nature on the scholar

1.11 Summation

1.12 Answers to CYP Questions

1.13 Questions

1.14 For Further Reading

1.4 Life and Works

Ralph Waldo Emerson was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1803. He descended of a long line of clergy men. His father was a pastor of the first church. Emerson's father died when he was only eight years of age. The widowed mother was left with the responsibility of bringing up five sons including Emerson. With the aim in the view to have proper education for the children, the family moved to Concord in 1814. Emerson was sent to Boston Latin school and then to Harvard college from where he graduated in 1817. He entered the Divinity school in 1825 and was licensed for the ministry in 1826. In 1829 he became the associate pastor to Henry Ware in the second church of Boston. In 1832, however he could not in good conscience conduct religious rituals to which he himself felt uncommitted.

Emerson had married in 1829, but his wife Ellen Tucker died in 1831. Emerson travelled to Europe and stayed there for almost a year. There he was seeking perspective on himself and his future. He began the public lecturing and writing which were to constitute his life's work. Emerson spent the rest of his long life in Concord. He married again in 1835 and his second wife bore him four children. The lectures were the principal means of support of the Emerson's simple life. He gave about 1500 lectures in all.

During all the years of his youth, Emerson had been carrying forward within himself a questioning search for the certitudes with which man might establish a direct, intuitional, and infinite relation with the process of life itself. He had a firm

belief in the potential ability of the individual to transcend church forms by piercing the symbolic veil of nature in order to merge with the Over Soul and domesticate its laws in his own character and life. He published *Nature* in 1836. The argument of this little book represented the result of his inner questionings, particularly since his voyage to Europe. It was the strongest motivating statement of American Transcendentalism and remains as the most instructive brief expression of high romantic and American expectation.

Emerson's unorthodox views provoked a storm of criticism. His phi Beta kappa address '*The American Scholar*' provoked a storm of abuse from orthodox ministers. He became one of the most famous and sought after speakers in the nation. When he published his '*Essays*', his position as the leading figure of the 'newness' was consolidated. Emerson remains to this day "a directing force in the school of American thought opposed to a materialistic that is divorced from the uses of life and from the necessities of healthy human personality". He was the editor of *The Dial* from 1842 to 1844. This journal served as the official 'outlet for Transcendentalists like Thoreau, Theodore Parker, and Margaret Fuller. In 1847, he published poems. He returned to Europe where he delivered the lectures that were later published as '*Representative Men*'.

In 1850, with his renunciation of Webster's stand on the fugitive slave law, he lost some of his belief in the possibility of total freedom for the individual and became increasingly concerned with history and politics. Though he accommodated historical experience in his epistemology, he remained true to his idealistic belief in the infinite role of man. "Experience" is one result of Emerson's wrestling with the problem of man's ultimate being and his historical limitations.

By the 1860s Emerson began to accept his diminished powers. The onslaught of age and increasing weakness had become noticeable before 1872, when he made an unsuccessful journey of recuperation to Europe. Emerson died in 1882.

"In his vigorous life he had travelled widely throughout the Republic declaiming from countless lectures the energy of his ideas which, in theories of

poetry, history, science, being and knowing, unified into an organic purpose the spiritual meaning of America. By now Emerson is no longer considered either the cool and bloodless sage of Concord or the easily optimistic Yankee who denied the existence of evil. While there is partial truth in both identifications of the man, recent scholarship, from a vantage point in time, has reconstructed a thinker whose restorative message of liberation will speak to the human condition as long as there exists the human mind, whose primacy he championed".

The Works of Emerson

Emerson's long life was one of literary, philosophical and mystical flowing. The ten years after his return from Europe, from 1834 to 1844, were the time when he formulated his basic ideas and wrote many of his essays for which he is famous today. At the beginning of his career, Emerson was a figure of controversy because of his opposition to "authority" in all spheres. Yet he soon established for him a reputation as a sound and original thinker, orator and author. Eventually he became known, on account of his writings and lectures, throughout the country as the, Sage of Concord,

His major works can be classified as follows:

The Journals :

Emerson wrote or edited several journals from 1820 to 1876. They contain Emerson's first significant writing. They constitute a full record of Emerson's development and afford an intimate view of his mind. He called his journal his "Saving Bank". From them he drew material for his lectures, essays, and poems, though often his essays were distilled versions of his lectures. In 1842 he wrote in his journal the following exhortation to himself: "Thou shalt read Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, Chaucer, Dante, Rabelais, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton and Goethe".

Nature :

This was Emerson's first published book which appeared in 1836, a year or after Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*. It expresses his fundamental concepts of 'Transcendentalism' and anticipates such later works as "*The Oversoul*".

The American Scholar :

This was published in 1837. This and the '*Divinity School Address*: (1838) taken together made Emerson famous over the country. These two created a great controversy and a sharp reaction from the church authorities. Therein he expressed his disregard for authority and great concern for the individual. "*The Divinity School Address* applied the ideas of "*The American Scholar*" to religion. Emerson openly rejects ecclesiastical dominion over the spiritual life of the individual and advocates that man should become his own church. He holds that truth is attainable only through intuition; it "cannot be received second-hand".

Essays, first series :

The first series of Emerson's *Essays* was published in 1841. This series include "Self-Reliance", "The over-soul", "Compensation", "Spiritual Laws", "Love", Friendship and "History".

Essay's Second Series :

The second series of his *Essays* appeared in 1843. These two volume, contained the most important collections of Emerson's prose. In these volumes he brought to fruition his unique form of the prose essay.

Representative Men :

This series was published in 1850. This carries his earlier ideas further and illustrates Emerson's concept of greatness through a study of six men. These six great men are : Plato, Swedenborg, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Napoleon and Goethe.

Other Prose Works :

Emerson's other prose works include *English Traits*, 1856; *The Conduct of Life*, 1860; *Society and Solitude*, 1870; and posthumously published *Letters to Carlyle* 1883; and *Lectures and Biographical Sketches*, 1884.

Poetry :

The first Volume of Emerson's poetry was published under the title "*Poems*" in 1847. His second volume of poetry under the title "May-Day and other Pieces".

A CHRONOLOGY

1803, May 25 - Emerson was born in Boston.

1811 - Death of Emerson's father; widowed mother left to bring up her four sons.

1813 - Admitted to Boston Latin school, where he remained upto 1817.

1817 - Joined Harvard college, where he remained upto 1821.

1820 - Began his journal in Feb.

1821-28 - School teaching and studying at Harvard Divinity School.

1829 - Appointed pastor of second church (unitarian) of Boston.

1829, Sep - Married Ellen Tucker

1831 - Death of his wife, Ellen.

1832 - Resigned pastorate and preached Farewell Sermon.

1833 1832, Christmas Day - Sailed for Europe

1834 - Returned to America and began his long career of lecturing.

1835 - Married second time. Moved to Concord with second wife Lydia Jackson.

- 1836 - '*Nature*' published in September. His first son Waldo born.
- 1837 - Delivered the famous lecture "*The American Scholar*".
- 1838 - Delivered "Divinity School Address".
- 1841 - Published Essays, first series.
- 1842 - His son Waldo died. Began editing the Transcendentalist magazine '*Dial*', continuing till 1844.
- 1844 - Published Essays, Second series.
- 1847 - Published Poems. Second visit to Europe.
- 1849 - Published collection of Nature, Addresses and Lectures.
- 1850 - Published *Representative Men*.
- 1856 - Published *English Traits*.
- 1860 - Published *Conduct of Life*.
- 1870 - Published *Society and Solitude*.
- 1872 - Visited Europe for the third time.
- 1875 - Published Letters and Social Aims.
- 1876 - Last entry in the journal. Failing badly in health and mind.
- 1882 - Died in Concord, April 27.

1.5 Emerson as a writer

Emerson and his Critics

Arnold said that "We have met in Emerson, a great poet, a great writer, a great philosophy-maker" as "tried by the highest standards". Still he is of "Superior

importance" because he is "the friend and aider of those who would live in the spirit". We cannot afford to ignore him "as a man of complex intelligence and sensibility", as Stephen E. Whicher observes. Yoor Winters took Emerson to be "a fraud and a sentimentalist", while Parkers held him to be a product of the disintegration of New England Puritanism. Some others charge him with lack of a vision of Evil. Santayana said that "at bottom, he had no doctrine at all" and that "his mind was endowed with unusual plasticity; with unusual spontaneity and liberty of movement".

Professor Dewey described him "as master of a finely wrought logic and as the philosopher of democracy". Baudelaire reading *'The conduct of life'* said that Emerson had "a certain flavour of Seneca about him, which effectively stimulates meditation". His declarations of cultural independence may account for his continued popularity.

Emerson's Symbolism

As a theorist, Emerson presented the monistic aspect of thought, and this led him to indulge in a monistic symbolism. He stated that the "perception of symbols" offers an apprehension of "the poetic construction of things" and of "the primary relation of mind to matter". Symbolism is a form of perception, and this perception, is a vision of the symbolic character of the universe, and of a symbolic union of man and nature, Symbolism so fascinated Emerson that he spoke of Art, not of the arts. "Art", he said, "was nothing less than the creation of man nature".

Emerson believed that nature presents the manifestations of God's moral laws. He had to agree that "every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact". He also stated, "The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face in a glass". Symbolic relations are established between heart and love, between laws of gravitation and purity of heart. Emerson says that "Nature is a language, and every new fact that we learn is a new word."

Emerson's Style :

Emerson regarded Montaigne and Bacon as models. He set down in his journal that "the proverbs of Solomon, the Essays of Montaigne, and eminently the Essays of Bacon collect and embody the wisdom of their times, and so mark the stages of human improvement". Like these essayists, Emerson is also aphoristic. The memorable aphorisms in *'The American Scholar'* such as "Life is our dictionary", "the great man makes the great things" etc.

Emerson writes balanced sentences with clauses balancing one another and creating a harmony. Emerson was a noted orator. Most of his essays were texts of speeches delivered by him. Emerson uses plenty of analogy and metaphor in his essays. Emerson has a fondness for paradoxical statements. He frequently uses such literary devices as contrast and repetition. Gorrod who is all admiration for Emerson's style, says, "Emerson's greatness in pre-eminently that of a verbal artist. The artist in him, the artist in words, was dominant – exiled from his verse to be the tyrant of his prose. Such a word- watcher, and catcher, as well as of phrase, has seldom been".

Emerson's Moral vision :

Emerson was a great Spiritualist and moral visionary. He showed greater affinity to the eighteenth century than in his firm belief in the "moral sense", or "moral sentiment", or "moral Law", Emerson found the term "moral sense" - with the connotation he later attached to "Reason" - in his reading to Stewart, the idea behind the term is clearly traceable to an earlier source, one which helps place the genesis of Emerson's ideas much more squarely in that deistic eighteenth century which is supposed to have repudiated thoroughly.

The idea of moral law as developed by Price finds its way early and late into Emerson's writings. It is important, finally, to note that in Emersonian terms the moral sentiment, moral law, and moral sense are equivalent to the relations of the Over-Soul, to duty, and to the law of the world. Emerson's early formulations of the

Check Your Progress Question

1. Emerson regarded _____ and _____ as models.

moral law show him to be surprisingly close to the eighteenth - century philosophers he is supposed to have disdained.

Emerson on Nature :

Emerson's first great book was *Nature* (1836). It emerged from a sense of security he felt. It was his Testament containing all that he taught later in his life. All his lectures, essays and poems grew out of this book. Emerson's most important - inquiry was into the meaning of hieroglyphic of nature. Nature can render spiritual service to man. Nature nourishes man when man stays at level of commodity. Next, man sees the simple perfection of natural forms, and he is delighted. But if he has to realize the perfection of the beauty of nature, this delight needs the enlivening spiritual element. A virtuous man is in harmony with nature, and she makes him "the central figure of the visible sphere". As this beauty is intellectually contemplated and explored, it gets related to thought and to virtue. This relation is the beginning of creative art, "the beauty of nature reforms itself in the mind, and not for barren contemplation, but for new creation". Emerson is concerned with the process of thinking not so much with the objects of thought. It reveals that when man surrenders himself to nature, he becomes one with God.

1.6 Central Thought of *The American Scholar*

Emerson withdrew from the ministry for a variety of reasons. One of these was the problem of action versus contemplation. As he withdrew, he examined various types of heroes like the man of Genius, the Seer, the Contemplative Man, the Student, the Transcendentalist, and the Scholar. Henry James thought by Scholar he meant "Simply the cultivated man, the man who has had a liberal education". But this is not true. James himself observes that Thoreau "looks upon himself to be, in the concrete, the sort of person that Emerson's 'Scholar' was in the abstract." Here we have a better understanding of the term.

Emerson examined the types, each type being Emerson who was striving toward an ethical goal. Emerson's true hero was the Scholar, and the true vocation is

that of the Scholar. In trying to understand and interpret this vocation, Emerson faces the tensions arising from a need to satisfy the impulses of his youth, to meet the humanitarian demand, to direct his own inclination and to grasp and follow the ethical ideals of English Romanticism. The result is an ideal for contemplation. The scholar is the Genius and also the inheritor of the New England clergyman's values. But these two are not compatible. In trying to bring them together, he was forced to over-emphasize self-reliance.

Emerson's Scholar has a character which is a confident acceptance of the idea that the universe is perfectly governed by God. Character also involves integrity, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance which arise from the soul's "absolute command of its desires". This would make all action unreal. Here is an ideal of passivity. Emerson held that God "has given to each his calling in his ruling love...has adapted the brain and the body of men to the work that is to be done in the world". We must allow those who "have a contemplative turn, and voluntarily seek solitude and converse with themselves."

The task of the Scholar is to classify the facts, and to find out the spiritual laws that determine them. He is related to the man of genius. He is not active like the practical man. But he does influence his associates through the unconscious radiation of his goodness. He is in a state of "virtual hostility" to society. He resists material prosperity and greed. He understands that the world is an appearance, and he grasps absolute truth through contemplation.

The special attribute of the Contemplative Man is character. But the conflict between action and contemplation does not leave Emerson. He does not want the Scholar to appear as a recluse, or as a coward. Manual labour is said to enrich his vocabulary. This is described as "pearls and rubies to (his) discourse". The end proposed is literary. The Scholar enters the world only to make the inarticulate thought "vocal with speech". More positively we are told that if the Scholar turns towards humanitarian reform he is likely to lose his self-reliance because of the tyranny of "the popular judgements and modes of action". So the contemplative man

has to turn his attention towards 'the perspective of (his) own infinite life'. He must explore and develop his own integrity. The scholar begins to find out that he can convert the world. And between passive meditation and active reform, he chooses the former, though he claims the virtues of the latter.

The intellectual domination of Europe does interfere with the Scholar's integrity. This has led Emerson to emphasize the nationalistic aspect. At the same time, he has to fight against materialism, the tyranny of the past, and the voice of the multitude. Also Emerson felt that he must contribute to "the philanthropic enterprises of universal temperature, peace, abolition of slavery". There is the Scholar obligation to put an end to evil in the universe. In this conception, we have, what Henry Nash Smith calls, "the Transcendental merging of divine logos with an apotheosized humanity". And Emerson himself remarked that "the path which the hero travels alone is the highway of health and benefit to mankind". The Scholar is more like Carlyle's Hero. He is a priest - king, a poet, a man of letters. He is the Transcendentalist, who, as Emerson noted, is the heir of Puritanism. Then we have "Scholars out of the church," out of the society. As Thoreau put it, "the society which I was made for is not here". The Scholar's way is not the "ease and pleasure of treading the old road, accepting the fashions, the education, the religion of society". He must take up "the cross of making his own, and, of course, the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time, which are the nettles and tangling vines in the way of the self-relying and self-directed". This is a stupendous task. It is not surprising that one of his hearers called the address - "our Yankee version of a lecture by Alclard". Here is a plea for the younger Scholar to ascend his proper intellectual throne with the help of reason. In other words, this is a plea for mental independence.

Emerson had almost a mystical faith in America. The new world came into being as a reaction to the institutions of the old world and the new world must have a new culture emerging spontaneously from the land. America then becomes the symbol of freedom. Every American will have to be guided by the spirit. "A nation of men will for the first time exist because each believes himself inspired by the Divine

Soul which also inspires all men." Emerson wanted the young Scholar to have a heart which can have awareness of truth. Emerson succeeds in his effort to penetrate to the oneness at the centre of the human individual.

The Scholar has a powerful eye with which he can achieve synthesis and relatedness. Emerson felt that America needs a "general education of the eye". He wanted telescopes placed on every street corner so that one can always see the stars which take us beyond the horizon. The American Scholar who is "the world's eye", must become an astronomer who could feel, "the grandeur of the impression the stars and heavenly bodies make on us". The Scholar has the awareness of the value of vision of "the inextinguishableness of the imagination". There is also the idea of humanity as the "greater man". It came from Swedenborg. Those who treat their careers as a mean of making a living are part men. Whole men are representative men who treat their activities as service to humanity. Then a farmer can be a whole man if he gathers food for humanity. The scholar sums the intellect of mankind in himself; and he thinks for the best interest of humanity.

"The American Scholar" has a consistent tone and the argument is developed systematically. This is because from the beginning we have the dominant organic metaphor. The essay depends on the concept of "one man" which is the social body of humanity. As against this we have a society "in which the members have suffered amputation from the trunk and strut about so many walking monsters- a good finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but never a man". Mechanical specialization has destroyed the organic wholeness of mankind and of the individual.

In this essay Emerson emphasizes change, progression, and originality, instead of merely absorbing the ideas of others, the Scholar must try to create his own idea. He must publish the living, contemporary truth. The object of knowledge is constantly growing, and the Scholar "Shall look forward to an ever expanding knowledge as to a becoming Creator". The world has a unity and man thinking must understand it and live in harmony with the movement towards this unity.

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

2. _____ has
destroyed the
organic
wholeness of
mankind and of
the individual.

The essay begins with the concept of undivided man and proceeds to define the Scholar as Man Thinking. Here Emerson explores the creative soul in man. The strong soul, he says finds opportunities for expressing actual living. Then the emphasis falls really on the man, not so much on the Scholar.

The essay was constructed on the lines of a classical creation. It has its exordium, argument and peroration. First he shares the importance of the theme chosen. Man is greater than any of his functions; and he should, therefore, remember that he is first a man and then a scholar or a priest or any other. The function a person has, cannot be allowed to destroy the individual's nature, to destroy the functionary. Thus he states: "thinking is the function, living is the functionary". The Scholar must be Man Thinking, not simply a thinker.

The three forces that shape a man into a Scholar are Nature, the mind of the past and active participation in life. Man and Nature have a correspondence. There is an affinity between them. Man seeks to systematize and unify; and so he explores the laws governing facts. Here the Scholar is a scientist who observes and classifies and who speculates on the relations between things. The perception of relation is an imaginative and intuitive act. Thus the "Schoolboy", under the bending dome of day" has an intuitive apprehension that the laws of nature are also those of his soul. Nature and his soul appear as the manifestations of the same universal soul. They arise from the same root and are related like leaf and flower, like the seal and its impression. If he learns of the one, he will know the other. Thus arises the command "Know Thyself" which is identical with "Study Nature".

The Scholar is influenced by the mind of the past in so far as it is embodied in the great classics. He is not to be crushed by this tradition. Books can only inspire him and renew his own creativity. The Scholar must "read God directly", live life and feel life. Reading must be followed by "periods of solitude, inquest and self-recovery". This is necessary because "genius is always sufficiently the enemy of genius by over-influence". Books have an important service during "the intervals of darkness" when we have to "repair to the lamps which were kindled" in the past. Just

as the unproductive fig tree may be inspired by the example of the productive one, so can a person by the example of the great man. The Scholar must have creative reading.

Each man is similar to the other. But he is something "new in nature", and he must arrive at the old conclusions by himself. All minds are self-sufficient parts of the Universal Mind which is growing or expanding. This leads Emerson to speak next of the influence of the life of action; the "Scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again". The Scholar must receive the world into himself. Experience is the means and the measure of knowledge. One knows only so much of himself as he knows of life. Experience offers the "raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products". Life is our source of experience and expression. The first and the last resort of the Scholar is action, the total act of living.

The Virtues of the Scholar are included in self-trust : and his function is "to cheer, to raise, to guide men by showing them facts amidst experiences." To achieve this end he must travel alone. He may be scorned. But he must bear the cross, "the self-accusation, the faint heart, the frequent uncertainty and loss of time, which are the nettles and tangling vines in the way of the self - relying and self-directed". He has his compensation when he becomes "the world's eye" and "the world's heart". His work is that of "preserving and communicating heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse, and the conclusions of history".

This function requires self-trust. Hence Emerson exhorts the Scholar to trust himself. He has to be free and brave and fearless. He finds that in "going down into the secrets of his own mind he has descended into the secrets of all minds". Because man has the divine in him, the world is still "plastic and fluid" and he can impress on his "signet and form". Since each man comprehends the particular natures of all men, each one is capable of sinking all the thoughts and performing all the acts and thoughts done by all men in the past. Coming to the present, Emerson states: "This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it".

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

3. _____ is the
means and
measure of
knowledge.

Accordingly, he grasps the nature of the present time and declares: "I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into today and you may have the antique and future worlds". This is possible because, like the universal soul, the highest law is imminent even in the humblest object. And "one design unites the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench."

Next, Emerson gives the authors who have had the "perception of the worth of the vulgar". The literature of the times has given importance to the "single individual". This recognition is the real basis of unity. "Everything that tends to insulate the individual - to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world his, and man shall treat with man as sovereign state - tends to true union as well as greatness". The Scholar must be self-sufficient and self-dependent. He must know all. Emerson says, "we will walk on our own feet; we will work with our own hands; we will speak our own minds. This spirit will give rise to "a nation of men" where each one will be "inspired by the Divine Soul".

The genteel, aristocratic, courtly tradition of Europe is to be replaced by the democratic and realistic tradition of America. This can be applied to any country and to any literature. Herein lies the universality of appeal which the Essay has.

1.7 Meanings and References

The American Scholar is the phi Beta kappa address delivered at Harvard college on August 31, 1837. The address was published in 1837 and again in 1838. It was published in London in 1844 as *Man Thinking : An oration*. The address presents a more concrete version of Emerson's philosophic system. It is the "Declaration of Independence" in American letters.

Literary Year - The academic year, then beginning about September 1.

Troubadours - Medieval wandering poets and rhapsodists.

Our day of Independence draws to a close

The view that American Literature should no longer follow European models but should be indigenous to America was expressed more effectively by Emerson. James Russell Lowell said that the speech marked the beginning of a new cultural epoch for America. He declared: "...The Revolution (had made us) politically independent, but we were still socially and intellectually moored to English thought till Emerson cut the cable..." Emerson's famous address is described by Holiness as America's "Intellectual Declaration of Independence".

Sere remains : Withered or useless ruins.

The Constellation Harp : The reference to the constellation Lyra, also called Harp. Metaphorically speaking, it represents the harmony of the universe. The harp was a favourite symbol of the Neoplatonists as well as of Coleridge and other romantics. See Emerson's Self - Reliance with its suggestion of harp imagery.

It is one of those fable...to answer its end - Emerson read this fable in Plato's Symposium and in Plutarch's "Of Brotherly Love" in his morals.

One Man - universal self

Metamorphosed - transformed

Ministry - vocation

Man Thinking - The word 'man' comes from a root which means "to think"

In this view of him contained -

This is the central conception of Emerson. Emerson's address was published as a pamphlet in 1837 and reprinted in London in 1844 under the title, *Man Thinking : An oration*

Behoof - benefit; Convenience

Anomalies - irregularities

Creator - Cf. "Whether or not there be a God, it is certain that there will be".

Translation in Emerson's Journals from a French source (Centenary Edition, Vol. I, P. 418)

Ancient Precept - Old Green principle.

Reason - Emerson uses the term in the sense of supranational faculty or intuition.

Cicero, Locke and Bacon - There were then standard authorities for the young student. Cicero (106-43 B.C.) was a great orator. Locke was the father of British empiricism. Bacon was the founder of induction.

Third Estate - Under the French monarchy the clergy and nobles formed the first two Estates. The third Estate, a term popularized during the French Revolution, refers to the "Common" people.

Books are the best of things....of good and fair - This passage boldly anticipates "Self-Reliance". Emerson uses the term "genius" in the Coleridgean sense of creative insight, another facet of Reason and the Imagination.

If the man Create not - Empedocles said that only like perceives like. Only the creative man understands the Deity.

Chaucer - English poet (1340-1400), the father of Modern English poetry. His famous work is the "Canterbury Tales".

Marvell (1621-1678) - An English poet noted for his lyric grace and delicacy, and admired by Lamb.

Dryden - The great Restoration poet, satirist, dramatist and critic. He is the father of Modern English prose.

As the old proverb - Indies - Cf. Life of Dr. Johnson. (Every man Edition, Vol. II, P.

216). It was a Spanish proverb.

Wit - knowledge ; intellect

Valetudinarian - weak ; sickly

Speculating men - thinkers; seers

Speculate - the root is specere meaning "to see".

Addressed as woman - because the priests wore frocks.

Are loaded with - are derived from and have a bearing on.

Other me - the not-self which is also me.

The corruptible has put on incorruption - see I Corinthians 15 : 54

Savoyards - inhabitants of Savoy, now a province of southeast France, then still with Italy.

Dictionary - reference - book.

Fits of easy transmission and reflection - The phrase is from Isaac Newton's optics (1704)

Unhandselled - unencouraged ; unappreciated.

Druids and Berserkers - Druids were priests among the ancient Celts of Britain, Gaul, and Germany. Berserkers were Norse warriors whom the sight of the field of battle would fill with a frenzied and resist fury; savage warriors.

Alfred (849-899) - Was the greatest of the saxon kings. He was the father of English prose.

Flamsteed and Herschel - British astronomers. Herschel (1738-1822) discovered the planet Uranus.

Great decorum - a critical code or standard.

"Without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution" - Kant's definition of freedom.

Wherever Macdonald sits, there is the head of the table - the aphorism with a slight variation appears in Cervante's *Don Quixote*.

Davy - Sir Humphery Davy, English chemist (1778-1829).

Cuvier - Baron Georges Leopold Cheretien trederic Dagobert Cuvier (1769-1832), French Naturalist.

Man is one - Man is identical in all places and at all times.

Etna - famous volcano.

Vesuvius - famous volcano in Sicily.

One Soul - One universal soul.

The boy is a Greek...enough traced - Many of the leading European literary and philosophical figures advanced the notion that the progress of civilization was marked by cycles of alternating periods, each with its characteristic idea. Emerson could most readily have acquired this notion from Carlyle.

Sickled thought - Hamlet, III . i. 85.

Provincial minstrelsy - The troubadours, travelling minstrels of province, ancient province in the south-east France.

Goethe, Wordsworth and Carlyle - These were some of the writers who influenced Emerson immensely. Emerson used Goethe as his archetype for "The writer" in Representative Men.

Emanuel Swedenborg - Swedish philosopher and religious writer
(1688-1772)

Pestalozzi - Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Swiss educational reformer.

Complaisant - too eager to please others.

I embrace the common - Here are the seeds of the literary realism of America. Howells quoted these lines as his gospel of Realism.

1.8 The Scholar's duties

Emerson says that the scholar's duty is "to cheer, to raise, and to guide men". He does his work "unhonoured and unpaid". The services rendered by the scientists are given recognition at once, but not those rendered by the poet. The British astronomers Flamsteed and Herschel discovered new stars and were honoured and rewarded for their discovery. Poets discover the hidden stars of the mind, that is, they throw light on obscure mental process. But they are not recognized. They are left languishing in obscurity. In competitive atmosphere of our time, the poet is singly elbowed out. He lives in poverty and solitude. Instead of following established conventions, the poet tries to break new ground and as a result, incurs only the displeasure of the public. Though neglected and denied due recognition, the poet finds consolation in exercising the highest functions of human nature namely, always thinking "illustrious thoughts" and in terms of public welfare. He derives satisfaction from "preserving and communicating heroic sentiments, noble biographies, melodious verse and the conclusions of history."

The Scholar must trust himself. He must never yield to the popular demand. Only he knows which is important and which is not. The majority of people are gazy

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

4. Who discover the hidden stars of the mind?

after ephemeral matters such as "some decorum, some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man". The man in the street is swept of his feet by insignificant matters. He does not have any historical perspective. He exaggerates trivial matters and views the pop of a popgun as the crack of doom. But the scholar is balanced and views matters in the proper perspective. The poet does not court public favour. He keeps exploring his own heart. But what he finds within himself is true of mankind at large.

"The poet, in utter solitude, remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them, is found to have recorded that which men in crowded cities find true for them also"

Besides trusting himself, the Scholar should be free and brave. The only hindrance that can restrict his freedom is that arising out of his own constitution. The Scholar should be brave also. He should face crises and dangers bravely and not evade them by peeping into microscope. Pursuing art instead of facing the social crisis is like the ostrich hiding its head in the flowery bush in a time of danger. Fear is worse than the actual danger. The poet should not succumb to fear. He should fearlessly face the danger, search its nature and inspect its origin. If he does this, he can deal the danger a mortal blow.

The writer keeps selling up ideals which are realized by mankind. Mankind restlessly demands the writer to create more and more ideals.

"First one, then another, we drain all cisterns, and waxing greater by all these supplies, we crave a better and more abundant food".

Mankind is never stagnant and workers are called upon to set goals for mankind to advance forward. So workers can never feel that their task is over.

Emerson next comments on certain characteristic features of our age which favour the blossoming of genius. People lament that our age has become excessively introspective. Emerson does not feel so. He thinks that introversion is favourable to genius, introversion helps a writer to observe the recesses of the human heart :

"Sight is the last thing to be pitied. Would we be blind? Do we fear lest we should outsee nature and God, and drink truth dry?"

A recent development favourable to the blossoming of literary genius is that the low and the lost are assigned a prominent place in literature nowadays. This movement was ushered in by Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, and was raised to great heights later on by Goethe, Wordsworth and Carlyle. These writers "embraced the common, explored and sat at the feet of the familiar, the low". Emerson waxes lyrical over the significance which these writers find in "Low" objects.

"....there is not trifle, there is no puzzle, but one design unites and animates the farthest pinnacle and the lowest trench".

Thus Emerson gives an elaborate account of the Scholar's duties and the circumstances favourable to the blossoming of his genius.

1.9 Influence of books on the scholar

Emerson is of the opinion that the Scholar is subjected to several influences. One of these influences is that of the past. The Scholar can never completely break with the past. There are several ways in which the past affects a scholar. Either through literature or through institutions, the past affects a Scholar. Emerson is of the opinion that books influence a Scholar much more effectively than institutions.

There were times when books were few and far between. Emerson called such times as "the first age". The Scholar who lived in such times had no books to feed his imagination. So he simply observed the world around. He expressed what he observed and thus gave the outside world; "the new arrangement of his own mind". That is, he interpreted the world from his angle in such a way that the interpretation gave a new look to the world. The Scholar absorbed the outside world through his observations and then got it out in his writings. In thus passing through the crucible of the Scholar's imagination the world underwent a thorough change. The writer gave an immortal expression to ephemeral actions. Matter -of-fact business was transformed by him into poetry. If the Scholar had a deep mind and absorbed the outside world fully, his utterances acquired a poetic flight and a musical quality :

"It was dead fact ; now, it is quick thought, it can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires. Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing".

Not always do the Scholar's direct observations of life around him result in artistic products. No air pump can create a complete vacuum. In the process of transforming life into artistic truth, sometimes impurities get mixed up. This is because the Scholar's distillation is not perfect. Instead of capturing only universal truths which are valid in all places and times, the Scholar sometimes includes matters of current interest which will lose their value soon or late. Most books written by Scholars are, therefore, appealing only to their contemporaries or to the following age. Books having a perennial appeal are rare.

A grave mischief done by books is that the worship of an author soon results in the corrupt practice of worshipping his book, just as worship of a hero, degenerates into the corrupt practice of worshipping his statue. The book which is thus acclaimed and accepted as sacrosanct gives rise to several commentaries and "colleges are built on it". Young men are trained to revere such books and consider them to be beyond criticism. Thus the writings of Cicero, Locke, Bacon etc, have come to be regarded as irresponsible.

"Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing their duties to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke which Bacon, have given; forgetful that Cicero, Locke and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books".

Worship of books leads to such useless activities as emendation, restoration of readings, etc, Bibliomaniacs constitute themselves into a privileged class such as the Third Estate of France.

A writer has to be particularly on his guard against being over influenced by a writer of the past. Emerson categorically asserts that he had better never seen a book than be warped by one. Using an astronomical image, Emerson says that a writer

should not become a satellite revolving round another writer; he should not allow himself to be diverted by another writer from his chosen orbit :

**“I had better never see a book than to be warped by its attraction
clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system”.**

English literature is full of writers who have been ruined by over influence. The large number of dramatists who grew up in the shadow cast by Shakespeare allowed themselves to be over influenced by Shakespeare and lost their originality. As a consequence what is most important to a writer is his soul active enough to assimilate the life that goes on around him. Past writers tempt an author to look backward and not forward. Our eyes are set in the forehead and not in the hindhead, which is an indication that God wanted us to look forward into the future and not backward into an irrevocable past.

Emerson however, admits that there is time when a Scholar has necessarily to depend on books. When an age is dark and unerlightened, the Scholar has to depend on the light shed by past writers. Also, sometimes a writer can produce books not by looking at life directly but deriving his inspiration from some other book. In this context, Emerson quotes with approval the Arabian proverb which says: ‘A fig tree, looking on a fig tree, becomth fruitful’. A writer at times finds his contacts with other writers fruitful, just as a fig tree's contact with another fig tree makes it fruitful.

The pleasure that we derive from the best books is remarkable. The best books have a timeless appeal. Though written in the past, they appeal to us also. Those writers have written for the edification of future generations, whom they never saw, just as some insects store food for the young grub which they never see.

Emerson says that just as there is creative writing, there is also creative reading. The creative reader finds that only a tiny portion of even great writers such as Plato and Shakespeare is really valuable. The rest can be safely rejected. There are certain writings which everybody must be conversant with. They are history and sciences. These subjects provide general knowledge and so everybody must learn them.

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

5. When the age
is dark, the
scholar should
depend on ____

Emerson has something to say about the curriculum prescribed for students in colleges. Only those portions of a writer which contain the essence of his teaching should be prescribed. When such quintessential passages are selected from various writers and prescribed for students, they kindle the imagination of readers just as sunlight concentrated by a lens raises fire. Thus Emerson traces the several ways in which books affect Scholars.

1.10 Influence of Nature on the Scholar

Emerson is of the opinion that the Scholar or writer is subject to several influences. He considers the influence of nature as "the first in time and the first in importance".

Emerson has a broad conception of nature. There is nothing in nature that does not have an influence upon the Scholar. The sun, the starry night the wind and the grass-these are some among the natural phenomena which have a marked influence upon the Scholar. Emerson's breadth of vision is in evidence when he includes among these natural phenomena men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden also. All created both animate and inanimate, influence the Scholar.

Having thus given a broad definition of nature, Emerson goes on to talk about the essential feature of nature. Nature, according to Emerson, is a "web of God". Like God, nature also has neither a beginning nor an end. Its continuity is "inexplicable". Its power does not get out of it. On the other hand, the power is "Circular" and returns "into itself". The power of nature is indestructible and inexhaustible. Another idea stressed by Emerson is that the power of nature resembles that of man. Man's spirit like nature's is a continuous, having neither a beginning nor an end.

Next Emerson goes on to talk of the way in which the Scholar deals with nature. Nature, according to Emerson, presents bewildering maze, The Scholar tries to trace the laws underlying this labyrinthine maze. The Scholar tries to trace the laws and at first every natural object appears to be distinct and different from the other. By gradual stages, the Scholar discovers that these objects can be classified. First, he

discovers the similarity between two objects, soon, he develops this talent for classifying natural objects to such an extent that he can tie together "three hundred" objects in a class. The crescendo of this classifying tendency is reached when the Scholar traces all natural objects back to "One stem".

"To the young mind everything is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things and see in them one nature; then three thousand; and so tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running underground " whereby contrary and remote things cohere and flower out from one stem".

The Scholar learns only to reduce the amazing variety of natural objects to order but also to trace parallels between the world of nature and the human mind. He discovers that natural objects are not "foreign" to him but have a law which is also a law of the human mind. Not only poets but scientists also undertake this twin task of tracing similarities between them and the human soul. For example, the chemist, faced with the baffling variety of material objects, traces "proportions and intelligible method" in them. Geometry through dealing with planetary motion, is an abstraction of the human mind.

The idea reiterated by Emerson is that there are striking correspondences between nature and the human soul. If nature is "seal", then the human soul is "print". Since nature is a replica of the human soul, the man who has failed to understand nature is ignorant of his own soul. In Emerson's opinion, the philosophical maxim 'know thyself; means the same thing as the scientific precept 'Study Nature' for nature and one's self resemble each other.

1.11 Summation

True to the doctrine of Transcendentalism, *The American Scholar* describes the triumph of feeling and intuition over reason, the exaltation of individual over society and the impatience at any kind of restraint or bondage to custom. Emerson urges the scholar to understand "the world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself

slumbers the whole of reason. It is for you to know all.” In his view, the scholar’s duty is “to cheer, to raise, and to guide men.” A scholar must read books to write his own books. The strong soul finds opportunities for expression in actual living. Emerson uses plenty of analogy and metaphor in his essays. Man once born has no way of avoiding responsibility for what he thinks, does, makes, suffers and enjoys. The visible world is only the end product of his spirit. Thus Emerson’s *The American Scholar* is a full-fledged and over-expression of Emerson’s transcendentalism.

1.12 Answers to CYP Questions

1. Montaigne, Bacon 2. Mechanical specialization 3. Experience 4. poets
5. light shed by the past writers

1.13 Questions

1. How does ‘The American Scholar’ illustrate Emerson as an architect of American culture?
2. ‘*The American Scholar* as an expression of Emerson’s Transcendentalism’ – Elucidate.

1.14 For Further Reading

1. Brooks, Van Wyck. *The American Romantics 1800 – 1860*. New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, 1968.
2. Fisher, William, J., Reninger, Willard, H., Samuelson, Ralph., Vaid, K.B. *An Anthology : American Literature of the Nineteenth Century*. New Delhi: Eurasia Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 2000.
3. Port, Joel. *Representative Man: Ralph Waldo Emerson in His Time*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

PHILOSOPHY OF COMPOSITION

-Edgar Allan Poe

2.1 Introduction

Edgar Allen Poe is an accomplished writer, poet and literary critic who produced many famous works that are still popular in the modern era. His ostensible purpose in publishing "The Philosophy of Composition" is simple to demonstrate his ability to describe a step-by-step process that leads to a successful poem or narrative. No other author, Poe observes, has had either the desire or ability to do so. He believes that before the work is even begun, the prose writer or the poet must begin with the end of a literary work. His "Philosophy of Composition" illuminates many of the principles like unity of effect, adaptation of complexity, suggestiveness, careful attention to form as a reflection of content, and a fascination with death and perversity.

2.2 Unit Objectives

- An explication of *The Philosophy of Composition*
- An analysis of *The Philosophy of Composition*

2.3 Unit Structure

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Unit Objectives

2.3 Unit Structure

2.4 Life and Works

2.5 Summary of *The Philosophy of Composition*

2.6 Summation

2.7 Answers to CYP Questions

2.4 Life and Works

Poe was born on the 19th January, 1809 in Boston. His parents were itinerant actors who played whatever roles they managed to get in theatrical performances. Poe's mother, Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins came from an English family. She was a talented and beautiful lady. Poe's father was an Irishman by the name of David Poe; but he was a rather irresponsible kind of man who had alienated his family by entering the theatrical profession. David Poe was not only rash and impetuous but was also addicted to drinking. There were frequent quarrels between him and his wife; and the result was that, when Edgar was still an infant, they got separated from each other. What happened to David Poe afterwards, never came to the knowledge of anybody.

Orphaned; and Adopted by John Allan, a Merchant

David Poe's wife had now to look after two other children, besides Edgar, who were born of her marriage to David. She had to earn a living by travelling from city to city and working as an actress on the stage. Towards the end of 1811, she was in Richmond; and there she fell seriously ill and died. All three of her children were soon adopted by sympathetic families. Edgar was received into the household of a prosperous trader by the name of John Allan; and it was thus that Edgar got the name of Edgar Allan Poe. Edgar now began to grow up in the city of Richmond where John Allan lived. As John Allan and his wife had no child, it was generally believed by the people known to them that Edgar would one day inherit all Allan's property.

Juvenile Love

When Edgar was six years old, the family moved to England where they spent the next five years. When the Allans returned to Richmond, Edgar, who was generally regarded as their adopted son, was admitted to a local school. It was at this time that Edgar fell in love for the first time. It was a case of calf love because the woman with

whom he fell in love was the mother of one of his playmates, Poe afterwards immortalized this woman by addressing one of his finest poems to her. This poem, very brief, has the title "To Helen". She was one of the many women who caught Poe's fancy in the course of his life. Unfortunately, she died shortly after Poe had met her. She was the first of several beautiful women in his life who was to die young.

No Meaningful Relationship Between Poe and John Allan

There was a lot of disparity between the temperament of Edgar and that of John Allan. The boy was imaginative, romantic, and desperately in need of affection because he had been deprived of the love of both his father and his mother. John Allan was a thick-skinned, realistic, and practical kind of man who could not understand Edgar's nature. This disparity between the temperament of the young man and his foster father proved a great handicap to the former. After Poe's return to Richmond from the University, the misunderstanding between him and his foster father deepened.

Disappointment in Love

Another circumstance also seems to have prompted Edgar to leave Richmond. Before going to study at the University of Virginia, he had met a girl called Sarah Elmira Royster and had fallen in love with her. Perhaps he had even become engaged to her without telling his foster parents anything about it. She was going to marry another man. The disappointment caused to him by this incident must have strengthened his intention to leave his foster parent's home, though he by no means terminated his relationship with John Allan and Mrs. Allan.

First publication : "*Tamerlane and other Poems*"

In Boston, Edgar Allan Poe got an opportunity to have his earliest literary composition published. Thus it was that Edgar Allan Poe's first book, a slim one, appeared in print. The book bore the title *Tamerlane and other poems* by a Bostonian. Poe mentioned himself only as a Bostonian because, he thought that it had been written by a native of their own city.

The Sad Fate of His Brother and Sister

The next step taken by Poe was to go to Baltimore where his second book of poems was published under the title *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor poems*. Poe's sister, Rosalie, had been adopted by a Richmond family; but she was also at this time a pathetic figure because she was found to possess less than normal intelligence. These circumstances of his life must undoubtedly have tormented Poe throughout his life.

The Second Edition of His Poems

Poe was twenty-one when he got an appointment at the United States military at West Point. He was court martialled for neglect of duty, and left West Point in the spring of 1831. He went to New York where he found a publisher who brought out a little book entitled *Poems* by Edgar Allan Poe, second Edition. Shortly afterwards he joined his aunt and her daughter Virginia.

Now for the first time Poe started writing short stories in quick succession. But his first real achievement was winning the first prize offered by a magazine in 1833 for his story "*MS. Found in a Bottle*". However, this did not come much of a surprise to Poe because he had always known that he would have to stand on his own feet. He left his aunt's household in Baltimore and went to Richmond where he got an appointment as the assistant editor of a periodical. For some time he lived there alone, extremely unhappy and suffering from acute depression which forced him to start drinking once again. He even thought of committing suicide. Sometime later his aunt and his cousin Virginia joined him in Richmond where they all began to live in a boarding house on Poe's meagre salary. In May, 1836, Poe married Virginia and it was the subject of much controversy. Perhaps, he married Virginia who was still very young, only to be able to keep his aunt Mrs. Clenn with him because he found in her the maternal image which he had been seeking all his life. He was always depending upon female companionship, and he needed the security of a home. Some biographers are of the opinion that his marriage to Virginia was never actually consummated and that Poe was not sexually adequate for the purpose. But that is only a conjecture.

Publication of short stories without Any Financial Gain

In January, 1837, Poe left his job in Richmond and went with his family to New York where he found a publisher for his only book-length story, *'The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym'*. This story was a fantastic account of mutiny, shipwreck, and adventure on the high seas. It did not bring any financial return to Poe. After a year or so of free-lance work in Philadelphia, he got an appointment as the assistant editor of *Gentlemen's Magazine* in which were published two of his stories. These stories were "*The Fall of the House of Usher*" and "*William Wilson*". His connection with this magazine lasted for less than a year. During this period was published another book by him under the title *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* in two volumes. Once again the book did not command much of a sale.

The only happy period of Poe's life

The great ambition of Poe now was to have his own magazine; and he devoted all his energies to achieving this ambition. In 1841, *Graham's Magazine* published his story of ratiocination. It was called the "*Murders in the rue Morgue*". It was the first detective story in English; and its central character named Auguste Dupin proved to be the ancestor of a long line of fictional detectives. The same magazine published two other stories by Poe. These were "*A Descent into the Maelstrom*" and "*The Masque of the Red Death*". Several important critical articles by Poe also appeared in this same magazine. In fact, this was the only happy period of Poe's life.

Some fame but no money

Then misfortune struck Poe. In January 1842, Virginia fell seriously ill. However, Poe continued to work under the compulsion of having to earn a living. In fact, he produced some of his best works at this time, among them his second story of ratiocination, called "*The mystery of Marie Roget*". The other excellent stories of ratiocination were, "*The Pit and Pendulum*", "*The Tell-Tale Heart*", "*The Gold-Bug*" and "*the Black cat*". Furthermore, a Philadelphia publisher brought out a book of his tales under the title "*The Prose Romances of Edgar Allan Poe*". In 1844, he

gave up his job with Graham's Magazine and moved once more to New York. It was there that he wrote his most celebrated poem "*The Raven*". This poem attracted more attention than anything he had written so far. His ambition was at last fulfilled. But the journal was in serious financial difficulties, with the result that Poe had to stop his publication soon afterwards. He was able to publish a new collection of his tales- and also a book entitled "*The Raven and other Poems*". By now he had been able to win some fame, but financially he was as poor as ever before. His wife needed medical treatment and he had therefore to work for long hours.

Virginia's Death, and Poe's Grief

The Year 1844 marked the highest point of Poe's career. The next four years were a period of decline. In the same year Virginia's condition became critical. She seemed to be now beyond all human aid. On January 30, 1847, she died. In his grief Poe plunged into the writing of mystical and pseudo-scientific work entitled *Eureka* in which he described his theories of the universe.

Heavy Drinking Once Again; Craving for Female companionship

During the summer of 1848, he remained horrible drunk for three weeks. In September 1848, he proposed marriage to a lady by the name of Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman whom he first met three years before. This lady was a widow, six years older than Poe, and she was herself a poet of sorts. She rejected his proposal of marriage. At about the same time Poe felt interested in another woman, Mrs. Nancy Richmond (the Annie of his Poem). She was married and was living with her husband in Lowell. Sometime later, he began to woo a woman called Mrs. Sarah Anna Lewis "the Stella" of a poem by him. She too was a poet and her husband too was alive. Besides, there were other women in whom Poe became interested, sometimes one after the other, and sometimes simultaneously. It seems that his friendship with none of them involved a sexual relationship. He craved for female companionship, and he thought that one or the other would fill the void in his life.

Check Your Progress Question

1. ____ is Poe's
pseudo
scientific work

A ray of light in the midst of darkness

Poe suffered a serious mental breakdown. He talked in a rambling and incoherent manner, and he saw visions and heard voices. He started drinking once again. A doctor there warned him that another attack of insanity would prove fatal. And then he met his boyhood sweetheart, Sarah Elmira Royster. He began to woo her and proposed marriage. She promised to marry him. She had some money and she said that she would be able to look after him and even finance his magazine. It seemed to him that his problems were over.

Drunkenness, and Death

On September 22, 1849, Poe took the boat to Baltimore in order to go to New York and make preparation for the wedding. What happened during the next few days is unknown. On October 3, 1849, he was found lying drunk and unconscious near a polling booth in Baltimore. He was removed in his unconscious state to the Washington College Hospital. There he remained unconscious for a time. On regaining consciousness, he began to talk incoherently. For four days his condition continued to be critical. Then at five O'clock in the morning of October 7, he uttered the following prayer; "God help my poor soul", and then breathed his last.

Poe's Temperament and Character

Poe's whole life was a kind of nightmare. This nightmare was even more dreadful than his stories. His writings were a reflection of the inner turmoil that was going on in him all the time. He remained obsessed throughout his life with such themes as pain, cruelty, premature burial, and the corruption of the body in the grave. In fact, his preoccupation with these themes indicated a strong death-wish on his part. The desire for self-destruction had a strong hold upon him. As a child, he had been very sensitive and introspective; and on growing up he became an ego-centric who developed into an ego-maniac. His egoism had developed to such an extent that on one occasion he said that he could not imagine any human being superior to himself. In spite of his poverty and the repeated rejections by various women of his

Check Your Progress Question

2. _____ are the reflection of his inner turmoil.

matrimonial proposals after his wife's death, he remained fiercely proud of himself, and difficult to deal with. He had no intimate friends and, as he grew older, there was nobody with whom he could have any free and frank conversations. He complained of his loneliness, but he did not try to find a solution for it except by a frantic search for feminine companionship. In early childhood he seemed, to be marked out for unhappiness; and the seeming possibility changed into a certainty as he grew older and older. In fact, he was not only born unlucky but proved to be self-destructive. Defeat after defeat afflicted him, with the result that his whole life became a slow suicide. As a child he was motherless; an adolescent he was humiliated and pushed out into a hostile world; and as a man he met continual disappointment. He took refuge in his fantasies. But he did not merely take refuge in fantasies; he turned them to a useful purpose. Out of his misery came the stuff of his dreams which became the material for his poems and his stories. The force which drove him to unhappiness and acute hypochondria also drove him to create his literary works. From the age of twenty-two, he was faced with a life of struggle and continuous poverty, for which his nervous system was sadly ill-equipped; but his very misfortunes and bad luck proved, in one sense, a blessing in disguise.

2.5 Summary of *The Philosophy of Composition*

The Need to Have the Denouement Constantly in Mind

Every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be actually written. It is only with the denouement constantly in mind that the author can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence. It is only with the denouement constantly in mind that the author can import the logic of cause and effect to the plot. It is only by so doing that the author can make the incidents, and especially the tone, tend at all points to the development of his attention.

Several Stages in the Composition of the Poem "*The Raven*"

Most writers try to give their readers the impression that they write their poems or their stories by a kind of fine frenzy or through an ecstatic intuition. These

writers avoid giving to their readers any impression that they have gone through any kind of arduous labour or any kind of preplanning in the writing of their poems or stories. However, I would like to take my readers the scenes and show them the stages by which I arrived at the writing of my poem *The Raven*. I wish to make it clear that no single point in the composition of this poem proceeded, step by step, to its completion with the precision of a mathematical problem.

The Unity of Effect, Essential in a poem

The intention was to compose a poem which should suit at once the popular taste and the critical taste. The first consideration was that the length of the poem. If any literary work is so long that it cannot be finished at one sitting by the reader, much of its effect upon the reader would be lost. A literary work can produce its full effect upon the reader largely through its unity of impression. A poem is a poem only in so far as it intensely excites the reader, by elevating his soul and all intense excitements are, through a psychological necessity, brief. For this reason, at least one half of Milton's long poem *Paradise Lost* is essential prose. This poem is a succession of poetical excitement interspersed, inevitably, with corresponding depressions. The whole poem has thus been deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the very important artistic element, namely the totality, or unity of effect.

A limit to length, necessary

It is clear, then, that there should be a distinct limit to the length of all works of literary art. It should be possible to finish the reading of a literary work at a single sitting. In certain classes of prose composition, such as *Robinson Crusoe*, this limit may certainly be exceeded because such works do not demand a unity of effect but that limit can never properly be exceeded in a poem. At the same time, it is necessary that a literary work should not be too brief. A certain degree of duration is absolutely essential for the production of any effect on the reader.

Check Your Progress Question

3. ____ elevates the reader's soul and ____ intense excitements.

Beauty, and the tone of melancholy

Having these considerations in mind, I at once reached the conclusion that the proper length for my intended poem should be about one hundred lines. Actually, "*The Raven*" consists of one hundred and eight lines. My next thought related to the choice of an effect or impression to be conveyed to the readers. Of course, I had in mind the necessary design of writing a poem which would be universally appreciated. In this context, it naturally occurred to me that beauty is the sole legitimate concern of a poem. It is in the contemplation of the beautiful that one finds the most intense pleasure, the most elevating pleasure, and the most pure pleasure. There is the effect of beauty; there is the effect of truth; and there is the effect of passion. If such elements are introduced, they should be kept in the background so that beauty remains the prevailing atmosphere and the principal essence of the poem. Beauty, in its supreme development, always excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is therefore the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The device of the refrain

I had to find some pivot upon which the whole structure of the poem might turn. I found this device in the refrain. However, I wanted to effect some kind of improvement upon the way in which the refrain of a poem had conventionally been employed. I therefore decided to diversify, and thus heighten, the effect by retaining the monotone of sound but varying the thought. In other words, I decided to produce continuously novel effects by the variation of the application of the refrain, while allowing the refrain to remain unvaried. Next, it became clear to me that the refrain to be employed by me must be a brief one, I should choose as the refrain for my poem. I could see that the word must be a sonorous one, and that it should be capable of protracted emphasis. This meant that the word to be chosen should contain the long "O" as the most sonorous vowel, and "r" as the most producible consonant. I had therefore to choose a word having these sounds and, at the same time, producing an effect of melancholy which was to be one of the poem. In my search for a suitable word, I arrived at the word "Nevermore".

Check Your Progress Question

4. 'The Raven' consists of ____ lines.

5. ____ is the most legitimate of all poetical tones.

The Bird, chosen for the Poem

The next task was to find some grand pretext for the continuous use of the one word "Nevermore". No reasonable human being could be expected to go on using the word "Nevermore" again and again. But then I decided in favour of a raven because a raven can speak as well as a parrot, while a raven's manner of speaking is more in keeping with the intended tone of melancholy.

Subject - matter : the Death of a Beautiful Woman

I had chosen the raven for my poem. The raven is incidentally a bird of ill-omen. This bird was monotonously to repeat the one word "Nevermore" at the end of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone and consisting of about a hundred lines. Now I asked myself which topic would serve to produce the feeling of melancholy in all readers. The answer was that, of all melancholy topics in the world, the most melancholic was death. Then the thought also came to me that death would be even more melancholic if death were closely allied with beauty. And so my conclusion was that the death of a beautiful woman would constitute the most poetical topic in the world. At the same time I realized that the speaker best suited for such a topic would be a bereaved lover.

The need to combine two ideas

I had now to combine the two ideas; the idea of a lover lamenting the death of his mistress; and the idea of a raven continuously repeating the word "Nevermore". This combination meant that the raven would repeat the same word in reply to the question that the lover might ask. The same reply "Nevermore" must serve as a reply to the questions which would naturally vary. This meant that the first query asked by the lover should be a commonplace one, that the second query should be less commonplace, that the third query should be still less commonplace, and so on. On hearing the same reply "Nevermore" from the raven, the lover would ultimately feel startled by the frequent repetition of a melancholy word. The lover would after a while, begin to feel superstitious; and he might then ask questions of a very different

kind. He might ask those questions not because he would believe in the prophetic or magical character of the bird but because he would experience a frenzied pleasure in so framing his questions as to receive from the expected reply of "Nevermore" the most delicious sorrow. At this point it became to be asked by the lover. The final question was to be one to which the reply "Nevermore" should imply the maximum conceivable amount of sorrow and despair.

Beginning the poem at its end

I wrote down the stanza which marks the climax of the poem. It is the stanza which begins thus.

Prophet, said I, thing of evil I prophet still if bird
or devil (Lines 91-96)

I composed this stanza at this point so that, by establishing the climax, I should be able more effectively to vary and graduate the preceding questions by the lover, and also in order that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanzas which were to precede so that none of them might surpass this one in rhythmical effect.

The Versification, and the stanza - Form

As for the versification of the poem, I do not claim any originality either the rhythm or the metre of the poem. However, there is certainly some originality in the manner in which the lines have been combined into stanzas. No such combination of lines had ever before been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is aided by other unusual and novel effects arising from rhyme and alliteration.

The place of the Meeting of the Lover and the Raven

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the raven. It was possible to set the meeting-place in a forest or in the fields. Such a device would surely keep the attention concentrated. Therefore I decided to place the lover in his chamber, especially because the chamber had been rendered sacred to

him by his memories of the beloved who had been visiting him there. The room is represented as richly furnished in keeping with my ideas of beauty. The locale having thus been decided, I had now to introduce the bird. It was natural that I should think of introducing the bird through the window. I described the bird flapping his wings against the shutter, and I made the lover imagine that the sound came from a tapping at the door. I did so in order to prolong the reader's curiosity and also to let the lover throw open the door, imagining that it was the spirit of his mistress who had knocked. I made the night a stormy one, firstly, to account for the raven's seeking admission and, secondly, for the sake of the effect of a contrast between the tumult outside and the physical serenity within the chamber.

The Bust of Pallas; the Tone of the Ludicrous

Then I made the bird descend on the bust of Pallas, for the sake of the effect of the contrast between the marble of the bust on one hand and the wings and feathers of the bird on the other. I chose the bust of Pallas firstly because it was very much in keeping with the lover's learning or scholarship, and secondly because of the sonorous sound of the name "Pallas". I gave to the raven's entrance an air of the fantastic which was close to the ludicrous, I made the bird enter the room.

"With many a flirt and flutter".

Not the Least obeisance made he - not a minute

stopped or stayed he

But with the mein of lord or lady, perched above my

chamber door. (39-40)

The most profound seriousness

The effect of the denouement being thus provided for, I immediately dropped the fantastic tone in favour of a tone of the most profound seriousness. This tone commenced in the stanza which begins with the line : "But the Raven sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only", (line 55) The lover now speaks of the bird as a "grim.unguinly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of Yore", and feels the fiery eyes of

the bird burning into his bosoms core. This revolution of thought or fancy on the lover's part was intended by me to induce a similar one on the part of the reader. The denouement proper comes with the raven's reply "Nevermore" to the lover's final question whether he shall meet his mistress in another world. With the denouement, the poem, in its obvious phase, may be said to have its completion.

The quality of suggestiveness

Up to this point, everything in the poem is within the limits of the accountable or the real. But in subjects so handled, it is essential to provide some amount of suggestiveness, some under - current of meaning, however indefinite. But in a moderate form, the quality of suggestiveness is of great value in poetry. That is why I added two more stanzas to the poem. With the result that the suggestiveness of these two stanzas seems to pervade all the preceding stanzas.

The Raven as an emblem or symbol

It may also be noted that the words "from out of my heart" involved the first metaphorical expression in the poem. These words, with the raven's reply "Nevermore", dispose the reader's mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader now begins to regard the raven as emblematical or allegorical. But it is only in the very last line of the very last stanza that my intention of making the bird emblematical becomes clear and distinct. I have made the bird emblematical of mournful and never ending remembrance.

2.7 Summation

Poe advises that a writer must choose a desired effect before putting pen to paper, he must consider originality at all times. The length should be directly proportional to the merit of the subject. After determining length, the author must choose a theme that is "universally appreciable" and induces pleasure. He uses concrete example of his experience of writing 'The Raven' to instruct how to write a poem.

2.8 Answers to CYP Questions

1. Eureka
2. His writings
3. Poem
4. 108
5. Melancholy

2.9 Questions

1. Describe the procedure followed by Poe in the writing of his poem *The Raven*, on the basis of your reading of "*The Philosophy of Composition*".
2. Comment on the procedure which, according to his own account is "*The philosophy of composition*"?
3. Discuss Poe's conception of poetry as expounded in "*The poetic principle*" and "*The philosophy of Composition*."
4. How does Poe describe in 'The philosophy of composition' the process by which he wrote his poem '*The Raven*' and how far does he convince you?

2.10 For Further Reading

- Poe : A Critical Study – Edward H. Davidson
- The French Face of Poe - Patrick F. Quinn
- The Tell-tale Heart: The Life and Works of Poe - Symons Julian

Unit 3 A

Space for Hints

Civil Disobedience

-Henry David Thoreau

3.1 Introduction

Henry David Thoreau is one of the writers who belong to no particular period in history. His 'Civil Disobedience' powerfully influenced the mind of Gandhiji and Tolstoy. It expresses the principle of passive resistance and the moral superiority of individual conscience to Governmental law. He gives too much importance to individual conscience and considers it as the sole valid guide in political action.

3.2 Unit Objectives

- Thoreau's basic political assumptions
- His views about individual
- His style in 'Civil Disobedience'

3.3 Unit Structure

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Unit Objectives
- 3.3 Unit Structure
- 3.4 Life
- 3.5 Summary
- 3.6 Notes and References
- 3.7 Critical appreciation
- 3.8 Thoreau's style
- 3.9 Summation
- 3.10 Answers to CYP Questions
- 3.11 Questions
- 3.12 For Further Reading

3.4 Life

Henry David Thoreau was born on July 12, 1817. He became a school teacher but did not like the job because he was expected by the authorities to cane the students in order to discipline them. His principle was that teachers should be 'fellow-students with the pupils'. Thoreau felt that our lives are smothered by luxuries. He wanted to prove that man could live a far happier life by cutting out all inessential things. He experimented with this style by living for two years in a small hut which he himself had built by the Walden Pond in Concord. He lived a very simple life close to nature, trying to achieve self-realization. After two years, he left the hut, saying; 'I had several more lives to live and could not spare any more for that one'.

During this period, he came to town to get his shoes mended. He was arrested for not paying the taxes. An aunt of his paid the tax on his behalf and he was released the very next day. Yet, the incident led him to write *Civil Disobedience* in which he explained how to resist an unjust government in a non-violent manner. This tract influenced Mahatma Gandhi and helped him involve his principle of Satyagraha.

Thoreau and Emerson admired each other. Emerson introduced Thoreau to Manu Smriti, Hitopadesa, Vishnu Purana, Bhagavad Gita and other ancient Hindu religious traces. Thoreau passed away on May 6, 1862.

3.5 Summary

It is often stated that the Government which governs the least is the best Government. Thoreau goes a step further and says that the best Government is one which does not govern at all but leaves the people absolutely free. A Government is only an expedient, that is, a useful instrument, not a binding principle. The standing army is only an arm of the Government. The Government is a mode chosen by the people to express the general will. A Government is sometimes misused.

Instead of the individual controlling the government the government controls the individual. The few who run a government do so to promote their own ends. The government does not stop wars or solve problems or educate the people. Instead of

Check Your Progress Question

1. Who was influenced by Thoreau's 'Civil Disobedience'?

following certain noble principles, the government follows expediency. That is it does things that are useful but not necessarily fair or moral. We need a better government. To express openly what type of government is commendable is the first step towards obtaining it.

At present the party which enjoys the support of the majority forms the government. This is wrong. The government run by the majority may not care for justice. It is not the majority but one's conscience that should decide what is right. The majority can decide only those matters which are governed by expediency. Conscience is the supreme judge in matters relating to what is right and wrong. Thoreau says that one must be a man with an alert conscience and then only a citizen. Most people lay an emphasis on conforming to the law. This is wrong. We should cultivate a respect for what is right. The citizen should not surrender his conscience to the legislator.

Thoreau next elaborates on this point. He says that those who respect the law may become agents of injustice and serve under unscrupulous men in power in a mechanical manner. Such men, according to Thoreau, are on par with 'wood and earth and stones'. Such wooden men do not command any respect and they are not good citizens. There are some others who have suppressed their conscience. They serve with their heads only. They do not and cannot distinguish between good and evil. Only a small number of men have their conscience functioning properly. They necessarily come into conflict with the unjust government. The government treats such conscientious people as its enemies.

Thoreau says that the American government of his time supports two evils-the existence of slavery and the war with Mexico. Unfortunately, the people of Massachusetts are much more interested in making money than in humanitarian issues. They obey the existing laws blindly. Their conscience is atrophied. Many are opposed to slavery and war but do nothing dynamic to root out these evils. Thoreau observes that under the name of order and civil government, we support our own meanness. We stop with merely casting our votes. We do not actively fight for good causes.

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

2. _____ is the
supreme judge
in deciding what
is right and
wrong.

Thoreau stresses that what we need is action based on right principles. We must find out what is right and change the existing social structure suitably. This results in respecting the divine in man. When there is an unjust law in society, what should the conscientious man do? He cannot obey it. It is not easy to change the unjust law. For, the government severely punishes those who violate the law, however unjust it might be. Christ was crucified. Copernicus and Luther were pronounced rebels. If a sensitive man is sure that a law is unjust, he should break it, whatever be the punishment for it. Thoreau says categorically,

What I have to do is to see, at any

rate, that I do not lend

myself to the wrong which I condemn.

Thoreau is not overwhelmed by the apparently invincible might of the state. One cannot do everything, but one need not despair. Something can be achieved even by a single individual. He can send a petition to the government. If the government does not respond to the petition, what is the petitioner to do? the constitution does not suggest any way out. Thoreau says that those who are against slavery should withdraw their support to the government. Even if just one man withdraws his support, it is a great gain. Thoreau says :

Any man more right than his neighbours

constitutes a majority of one already.

Thoreau gives a homely example to drive home his point. Supposing a tax collector who is an agent of the government tries to levy an unjust tax, what should a citizen do? If he refuses to pay the tax, he will be put in jail. Thoreau says that we need not be frightened of such a development. He regards this as the beginning of a great struggle to establish the right. Thoreau says that under an evil government the true place for a just man is the prison. The free man goes to jail and the slaves remain outside. This is a paradox which contains a deep truth. If a thousand people refuse to pay the tax, it will create a dislocation in society. But this is certainly better than

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

3. Which is the true place for a just man?

paying tax to enable a government to wage bloody wars. If the tax collector refuses to collect the unjust tax and resigns his office, a great revolution will be set in motion. This might cause some bloodshed. But, says Thoreau, this bloodshed will develop a man's real manhood and his immortality will flow out, as he bleeds to an everlasting death. That is, the man who lays down his life for a noble cause will gain everlasting fame.

Many have vested interests in extending support to an unjust government. They are afraid that if they do not support the government, the government will seize their property. The just man has no such fear because he has no property to lose. The just man depends on his internal resources. He is not interested in accumulating property for himself and the members of his family. Hence, he is always ready to fight with all his might. As Confucius said :

If a state is governed by the principle of reason, poverty and misery are subjects of shame; if a state is not governed by the principles of reason, riches and honours are the subjects of shame.

Thoreau does not want to be a member of a corporate body for, it will rob him of his individuality and curtail his freedom of action. He did not pay the poll tax and so was put in prison for one night. But Thoreau says that the government arrested only his body and not his mind. Because he could think freely even when he was in prison, the prison appeared to him to be a great waste of stone and mortar. Because the government thought that it could control his mind also, he pitied it. Thoreau is quite sure that the government can touch a man's body and senses only and never his mind or moral sense. He wants every man to live according to the own nature and not according to the nature of the government or of the nature of others is as idiotic as trying to make one plant grow like another plant belonging to another species. For example, a brinjal plant cannot be expected to grow like a coconut tree. Thoreau says that if a man is thought - free, fancy free and imagination - free, that is, if a man has free thinking power, free fancy and free imagination, imprisonment cannot affect him in any way.

Thoreau says that the government must promote free trade, freedom of union and freedom of rectitude. Only if people live freely, a country can become strong. All religious scriptures emphasize the value of freedom but no legislator has "wisdom and practical talent" to incorporate the teachings of religious scriptures into legislation.

Thoreau says that a good government is one which is based on the sanction and consent of the governed. The government must treat the individual with respect; for, the individual has 'a higher and independent power'. If a few members want to live aloof from the state, they should be allowed to do so. This is as natural as allowing a fruit to ripen and fall off according to its inner nature.

3.6 Notes and References

the motto - the motto of the United States Magazine and Democratic Reviews, a monthly literary political journal. A similar idea is expressed by Emerson in his essay Political. Paine, Jefferson and many other political thinkers have also expressed similar views.

expedient	-	a useful instrument, not a binding principle
army	-	Note the pun on 'arm' and 'army'
Mexican war	-	The war between the United States and Mexico (1846-48) was intended to extend slavery to Mexico.
bent it	-	control it
din	-	noise
alacrity	-	quickness
India rubber	-	a kind of crude rubber made from latex
no Government men	-	In the forties of the last century, many anarchists wanted all Governments to be dissolved.
conscience	-	inner voice. Sir Edward Coke said: 'Corporations have no souls'.
the right	-	'the morally correct path'
Powder monkeys	-	boys carrying gun powder to the guns on board a ship.

black arts	-	Witchcraft
not a drum	-	from Charles Wolp's poem. The Burial of Sir John More at Corunna.
Porse comitatus	-	the habitants of a locality who may be commanded by the police in times of disorder to maintain peace.
clay, stop a hole	-	from <i>Hamlet</i> V, i. 203-204; Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay, might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
I am too high....	-	from Shakespeare's <i>King John</i> V, ii, 79-82.
Slaves, Government	-	the Government which controls both slaves and free men alike.
Revolution of '75	-	the American War of Independence began in Concord on April 19, 1775.
ado	-	fuss
a whole country	-	Mexico which the American army invaded.
Paley	-	William Paley (1743 – 1805), author of <i>Moral and Political Philosophy</i> . Thoreau is quoting from this book.
drown myself	-	Cicero says in his <i>De Officiis</i> 'If a fool should snatch a plank from a wreck, shall a wise man wrest it from him if he is able?
lose it	-	'whoever will save his life shall lose it' (Matthew, 10: 39)
'A drab of ...'	-	From Cyril Tournauer's <i>The Revenger's Tragedy</i> IV, IV
merchants and farmers	-	The merchants and farmers of South America opposed the abolition of slavery, fearing that it would ruin their business and farming.
leaven the whole lump	-	know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (Corinthians)

not staked	-	not in stake
Baltimore	-	The Democratic Party convention, held in Baltimors in May, 1848, to elect a candidate of the party to contest for the post of the President of America, cautiously avoided any discussion of slavery to avoid a split in the party.
odd Fellow	-	The order of odd Fellows was a secret Fraternal society for mutual financial help
gregariousness	-	sociability
self-reliance	-	Emerson wrote an essay of this name.
virile garb	-	In ancient Rome, Fourteen – year old boys wore a special toga to show that they had attained manhood.
scourge	-	whip
the president	-	President Polk called for volunteers to fight against.
their quota	-	their taxes
Action from Principle	-	action based on certain noble principles.
Copernicus	-	contrary to what was given in the Bible, Copernicus proved that the earth rotates the sun.
Luther	-	He was the leader of the German Reformation. He was excommunicated by Pope Leo X in 1520.
Washington	-	led the revolt against British in the American War of Independence
Franklin	-	a severe critic of Britain. The British Government branded them rebels.
abolitionists	-	those who were for the abolition of slavery.
majority	-	A man with God is always in the majority (John Knox).
Parchment	-	a written law.
The State's ambassador	-	Thoreau's friend, Samuel Hoar who protested against the imprisonment of negro seamen in South Carolina.
The Indians	-	the American Indians; Red Indians.
real manhood	-	conscience

went to	-	accustomed to
Herodians	-	followers of Herod
some years ago	-	the people of Concord had to pay a compulsory Church tax. Because of his severe protest, Thoreau was exempted.
Lyceum	-	a private educational institution
Poll tax	-	This was compulsorily levied in Concord. Thoreau did not pay it to show his protest against America's war against Mexico. When he came from Walden to Concord to have his shoes mended, he was arrested and put in jail for one night.
higher law	-	the conscience or the voice of God within man's mind.
the Rhine	-	the river in central Europe.
a shire town	-	the seat of Government in country.
green	-	very angry.
for summer weather only	-	only when you are happy.
my prisons	-	a book by the Italian patriot Silvio Pellico in which he narrated his experiences when he was put in jail by the Austrian Government.
Mussalman	-	Muslim.
Orpheus	-	His songs on his lyre made trees and rocks follow him.
we must effect	-	from George Peele's <i>The Battle of Alcazar</i> (1588-89)
thought-free	-	freedom of thought
Webster	-	Daniel Webster, a U.S. Senator who accepted slavery.
I have never made	-	Webster's speech on the Taxes question in 1845.
The light which if shed	-	Thoreau pleads for constitution based on spiritual principles.
the rights of man	-	a reference to Tom Paine's <i>Rights of Man</i> .
to live aloof	-	like the rishis of ancient India in secluded ashrams.

3.7 Critical Appreciation

Thoreau enunciates four important principles in his treatise *Civil Disobedience*. They are:

1. A man should obey his conscience and not the unjust laws of the land.

2. He should be prepared to go to jail as a consequence of disobeying the authorities.

3. In a country ruled by an unjust government, the right place for a thinking, conscientious individual is the jail.

4. When righteous people court arrest, a strong anti government campaign will be set in motion. The unjust government will be finally forced by the general uprising to repeal its unjust laws.

Thoreau did not pay the poll-tax which he thought was unjustifiable. For this offence, he was arrested and put in jail. Even though he was released on the very next day, the time he spent in jail made him reflect on how an unjust government makes inroads on the liberty of the individual and how it is of paramount importance for the individual to resist the unjust Government and, if necessary, to court arrest. Civil Disobedience is not an arid tract of academic interest alone. That it has a relevance to our age was proved by Mahatma Gandhi who openly declared that his weapon of non-violent resistance or satyagraha was derived from Thoreau. Through Gandhi, Thoreau's teachings inspired the whole of India to rise in revolt against the British yoke and finally overthrow it.

It is often stated that the government which governs the least is the best government, Thoreau goes a step further and says that the best government is one which does not govern at all but leaves the people absolutely free. A government is only an expedient, that is, a useful instrument, not a binding principle. The standing army is only an arm of the government. The government is a mode chosen by the people to express the general will. A Government is sometimes misused.

Instead of the individual controlling the government the Government controls the individual. The few who run a government do so to promote their own ends. The government does not stop wars or solve problems or educate the people. Instead of following certain noble principles, the government follows expediency. That is, it does things that are useful but not necessarily fair or moral. We need a better government. To express openly what type of government is commendable is the first step towards obtaining it.

At present, the party which enjoys the support of the majority forms the government. This is wrong. The government run by the majority may not care for justice. It is not the majority but one's conscience that should decide what is right. The majority can decide only those matters which are governed by expediency. Conscience is the supreme judge in matters relating to what is right and wrong. Thoreau says that one must be a man with an alert conscience and then only a citizen. Most people lay an emphasis on conforming to the law. This is wrong. We should cultivate a respect for what is right. The citizen should not surrender his conscience to the legislator.

Thoreau next elaborates on this point. He says that those who respect the law may become agents of injustice and serve under unscrupulous men in power in a mechanical manner. Such men, according to Thoreau, are on a par with 'wood and earth and stones'. Such wooden men do not command any respect and they are not good citizens. There are some others who have suppressed their conscience. They serve with their heads only. They do not and cannot distinguish between good and evil. Only a small number of men have their conscience functioning properly. They necessarily come into conflict with the unjust government. The government treats such conscientious people as its enemies.

Thoreau says that the American government of his time supports two evils - the existence of slavery and the war with Mexico. Unfortunately, the people of Massachusetts are much more interested in making money than in humanitarian issues. They obey the existing laws blindly. Their conscience is atrophied. Many are opposed to slavery and war but do nothing dynamic to root out these evils. Thoreau observes that under the name of order and civil government, we support our own meanness. We stop with merely casting our votes. We do not actively fight for good causes.

Thoreau stresses that what we need is action based on right principles. We must find out what is right and change the existing social structure suitably. This results in respecting the divine in man. When there is an unjust law in society, what should the conscientious man do? He cannot obey it. It is not easy to change the

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

4. The government run by the majority may not care for _____

unjust law. For, the government severely punishes those who violate the law, however unjust it might be. Christ was crucified, Copernicus and Luther were excommunicated, and Washington and Franklin were pronounced rebels. If a sensitive man is sure that a law is unjust, he should break it, whatever be the punishment for it. Thoreau says categorically :

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the wrong which I condemn.

Thoreau is not overwhelmed by the apparently invincible might of the state. One cannot do everything, but one need not despair. Something can be achieved even by a single individual, he can send a petition to the government. If the government does not respond to the petition, what is the petitioner to do?. The constitution does not suggest any way out. Thoreau says that, those who are against slavery should withdraw their support to the government, Even if just one man withdraws his support, it is a great gain, Thoreau says;

Any man more right than his neighbours constitutes a majority of one already.

Thoreau gives a homely example to drive home his point. Suppose a tax collector who is an agent of the government tries to levy an unjust tax, what should a citizen do? If he refuses to pay the tax, he will be put in jail. Thoreau says that we need not be frightened of such a development. He regards this as the prison. The free man goes to jail and the slaves remain outside. This is a paradox which contains a deep truth. If a thousand people refuse to pay the tax, it will create a dislocation in society. But this is certainly better than paying taxes to enable a government to wage bloody wars. If the tax collector refuses to collect the unjust tax and resigns his office, a great revolution will be set in motion. This might cause some bloodshed. But, says Thoreau, this bloodshed will develop a man's real manhood and his immortality will flow out, as he bleeds to an everlasting death. That is, the man who lays down his life for a noble cause will gain everlasting fame.

Many have vested interests in extending support to an unjust government. They are afraid that if they do not support the government, the government will seize their property. The just man has no such fear because he has no property to lose. The just man depends on his internal resources. He is not interested in accumulating property for himself and the members of his family. Hence, he is always ready to fight with all his might and main. As Confucius said :

If a state is governed by the principles of reason, poverty and misery are subjects of shame, if a state is not governed by the principles of reason, riches and honours are the subjects of shame.

Thoreau does not want to be the member of a corporate body; for, it will rob him of his individuality and curtail his freedom of action. He did not pay the poll tax and so was put in prison for one night. But Thoreau says that the government arrested only his body and not his mind. Because he could think freely even when he was in prison, the prison appeared to him to be a great waste of stone and mortar. If the government thought that it could control his mind also, he pitied it. Thoreau is quite sure that the Government can touch a man's body and senses only and never his mind or moral sense. He wants every man to live according to his own nature and not according to the nature of the government or of the foolish majority. Asking a man to live in imitation of the nature of others is as idiotic as trying to make one plant grow like another plant belonging to another species. For example, a brinjal plant cannot be expected to grow like a coconut tree. Thoreau says that, if a man is 'thought-free, fancy-free and imagination-free', that is, if a man has free thinking power, free fancy and free imagination, imprisonment cannot affect him in any way.

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

5. A corporate body will rob his _____.

Thoreau says that the Government must promote free trade, freedom of union and freedom of rectitude. Only if people live freely, a country can become strong. All religious scriptures emphasize the value of freedom but no legislator has the 'wisdom and practical talent' to incorporate the teachings of religious scriptures into legislation.

Thoreau says that a good government is only the government which is based on the sanction and consent of the governed. The government must treat the individual with respect; For, the individual has a higher and independent power. If a few members want to live aloof from the state, they should be allowed to do so. This is as natural as allowing a fruit to ripen and fall off according to its inner nature.

3.8 Thoreau's style

Civil Disobedience contains a rich variety of stylistic devices. Thoreau uses plenty of similies, metaphors and personifications in this essay. The following are a few examples :

'After the first blush of sin comes
its indifference'

In this sentence , sin is represented as a woman who blushes when sinning for the first time and grows callous later.

The state met me on behalf of the church
their friendship was for summer
weather only'.

In this sentence the state and the church are personified as friends, though not very sincere.

I cannot expect, like Orpheus, to change the nature of the rocks and trees and beasts.

Here is a contrast between Thoreau and the mythological musician, Orpheus who, with his entrancing music, made trees and beasts follow him. Sometimes, Thoreau puns on words. The title '*Civil Disobedience*' is itself based on a pun. It might mean disobedience of the civil authorities and also a civil or courteous form of disobedience. His definition of a 'wild' man as a 'willed' man, and of a professor of philosophy not as a philosopher but simply as a man who professes it - these are some instances of amusing word-play in the essay.

Thoreau's language has an aphoristic or epigrammatic quality. There is a sprinkling of such statements in this essay. The following are a few examples :

The standing army is only an arm of the standing Government.

In this sentence, there is a pun on 'army' and 'arm'

The state divides the individual, separating the diabolical in him from the divine.

The sentence means that the man who rebels against a bad government manifests the divine in him whereas a slavish follower shows only the 'diabolical' in him. Thoreau condemns the voter who casts his votes and thinks that his responsibility is over. He advises the voter to go beyond voting and exert himself by launching a civil disobedience movement. He says ;

Cast your whole vote, not a strip of
paper merely, but your whole
influence

Some of Thoreau's statements are shocking because they contain antithetical elements. The following are some striking examples :

That Government is best which governs not at all.

That is, an ideal government leaves the individual absolutely free. In another context, he advances the audacious notion that

.... the only house is a slave state in
which a free man can abide with
honour is the prison.

Thoreau looks upon the evil state as a huge machine which the just man has to resist. He says;

let your life be a counter to stop the machine.

Thus, both intellectually and stylistically, *Civil Disobedience* is a remarkable essay.

“That Government is best which governs not at all”.

Thoreau is an ardent lover of liberty. He criticizes the government because it forces an individual to obey its dictates. Even an evil Government imposes itself on its citizens. As a consequence, the individual has to accept even those policies of the government which are patently and potentially evil. Thoreau abhors such a state of affairs. He advances the startling notion that the best government is one that does not govern at all but leaves the citizen absolutely free to behave according to the promptings of his own conscience.

What will happen if all are left free and the Government withdraws all its laws? Will there not be anarchy and confusion all over such a state? Thoreau, the votary of freedom, is blind to this possibility.

“Now what are they? Men at all? or small movable forts and magazines at the service of some unscrupulous man in power?”.

“break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine”.

3.9 Summation

As an individual, Thoreau is an ardent lover of liberty. The essay ‘Civil Disobedience’ is based on the dictates of a conscience. The individual becomes strong because of his conscience, because of his moral uprightness. Since the government is devoid of conscience it is weak. Thoreau argues the government can destroy the body not the soul. The government considers the individual to be identical with his body. This is ludicrous because the soul is beyond all weapons and restrictions. So Thoreau emphasizes the superiority of the moral law.

3.10 Answers to CYP Questions

1. Gandhi 2. Conscience 3. Prison 4. justice 5.individuality

3.11 Questions

1. What is Civil Disobedience according to Thoreau?
2. Personality of Thoreau is revealed in 'Civil Disobedience'. Discuss
3. What are the four important principles that Thoreau enunciates in his 'Civil Disobedience'?

3.12 For Further Reading

1. Emerson and Thoreau : Joel Porte
2. Thoreau : A Century of Criticism : Edited by Walter Harding

Unit – 3 B

Art of Fiction

-Henry James

Space for Hints

3.1 Introduction

Henry James is considered to be one of the most extraordinary figures in modern literature. He was the largest literary figure to come out of America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was Henry James who had achieved the first completely satisfying way of writing a novel. In the nineteenth century, Henry James established novel as an art form. He deals with “minds instead of action, building plan instead of building material”. He is preoccupied with form and unity and order and objectivity. In a sense he is the father of psychological novel. He reveals the soul of his characters. Conrad called him “the historian of fine consciences.” He scorned romanticism for its untruths and naturalism for its cluttered documentation.

3.2 Unit Objectives

- Henry James' contribution to the theory of the modernist novel
- Indispensability of the novelist's contribution to the investigation of life's complexity

3.3 Unit Structure

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Unit Objectives

3.3 Unit Structure

3.4 Life and Works

3.5 Summary

3.6 Summation

3.7 Answers to CYP Questions

3.8 Questions

3.9 For Further Reading

3.4. Life and Works

James was born in New York but during his maturity he lived almost entirely in England. His associations and ideals were those of Europe rather than America. He began his career with essays and novels. His first published novel *Roderick Hudson* (1876) deals with a problem that he had to face in his personal life that of a young American brought into contact with the richer and more exacting civilization of Europe. This was the problem of *The American* (1877) and *Daisy Miller* (1879) also. *The Portrait of a Lady* is the finest of his earlier works. It shows an American girl enduring life with her vile English husband. *The Tragic Muse* shows the conflict between art and abject materialism. *The Awkward Age* (1899) is again about a young girl in the midst of a corrupt social environment which is the theme of such later novels as *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), *The Golden Bowl* (1904) and *The Ambassadors* also James Joyce's delights in psychological analysis of characters. His style is extremely elaborate and refined. It makes little appeal to the larger reading public. He popularized the 'Point of view' technique.

3.5 Summary

Paragraph : 1

Henry James begins on a humble note saying that the title "The Art of Fiction" is a vast one and that he is 'affixing' it rashly to his 'remarks' on fiction. He, however, feels emboldened by Walter Besant's lecture on story-telling which has aroused a noticeable interest in this literary genre. Also, as a writer of novels, he thinks that he is justified in voicing his views.

Paragraph : 2

There was not much theorising about the art of fiction during the time of the two Victorian stalwarts, Dickens and Thackeray. Just as one swallows a pudding

Check Your Progress Question

1. Who popularized the point of view technique?
2. Name two Victorian stalwarts?

without any analysis, the Victorians read novels without any criticism. Henry James observes that without discussion and experiment literary ventures are bound to stagnate. Discussion, suggestion and formulation are 'Fertilizing' forces and make for development. Besant's lecture on how novels should be written and published has generated 'a serious, active inquiring interest.'

Paragraph : 3

A novelist must take his craft seriously. Only then will the reading public bestow serious attention on him. In the past, fiction was regarded either as wicked or as ocular. The evangelist was hostile to the novel on the grounds that it did not address itself of the 'immortal part' of human nature. Henry James sees much in common between the painter and the novelist, though their 'vehicles' are different. Both represent life and can sustain and inspire each other.

Henry James next traces what is common in history and novels. Like the historian, the novelist also derives his material from 'documents and records'. But the pity is that even some of the greatest novelists do not speak with the 'assurance' and 'tone' of the historian. They are apologetic and give themselves away. Trollope, for example, says that he is dealing not with realities but with imaginary matters. He says that he is 'merely' making believe and that the events he narrates, being imaginary can be given any turn to suit the reader's expectations. The implication of Trollope's statement is that the novelist is not looking for the truth. Both the historian and the novelist illustrate 'the past' and 'the actions of men'.

But the novelist has far greater difficulty than the historian as his material is not 'purely literary'. The novelist's material, unlike the historian's is derived from life in all its vastness and not merely from documents and records. Finally, Henry James says that the novelist has much in common with the philosopher and the painter.

Paragraph : 4

In this paragraph Henry James examines Besant's concept that fiction is a fine art like music, poetry, painting, architecture, etc. and that the writer of fiction should

Check Your Progress Question

3. Whose lecture has generated active enquiring interest?

4. The novelist can be compared with ____ and ____

enjoy all the emoluments and rewards that the other artists enjoy. Besant's insistence on the artistic quality of fiction shows how much this quality was neglected in the past. In protestant circles, the preoccupation with art is believed to have a debilitating influence on the writer as well as the reader. Art is regarded as being antithetical to morality, instruction and amusement. The search for an artistic form is dismissed as 'Priggish' and 'superfluous'. Most readers of fiction are casual. For them, the reading of a novel is nothing more than an exercise in skipping'. They care not for an artistic but for a 'good' novel. Their definition of a good novel is that it should deal with virtuous people in eminent positions, and be packed with sensational events which make readers impatiently skip 'descriptions' and 'jump ahead' to find out who the villain of the piece is and whether the missing will is really traced out at the end. A good novel is also expected to have a happy ending, distributing rewards to all the deserving people at the end, like the distribution of dessert and ice at the end of a good dinner. Art is regarded as a 'meddlesome doctor' who does not allow a writer to bring about a happy conclusion with 'agreeable after-tastes'.

Paragraph : 5

Henry James' definition of a good novel is that it is not forgotten by readers and bad novels are thrown into the infinite rubbish-yard beneath the back-windows of the world. But good novels are a never - failing source of illumination to people groping in the dark. They 'emit' light and kindle our desire for perfection. Henry James expects two things of a good novel that it should be interesting and reveal a unique vision ('a personal, direct impression of life'). A novelist can reproduce life only if he is absolutely free to make any observations he deems correct in any manner he thinks fit. Prescribing matter and manner for the novelist amounts to fencing him.

Henry James says that a great novelist is distinguished by his technique or method of execution. We measure a novelist by his execution. There is no limit at all to a novelist's experiments, efforts discoveries, successors. The novelist, like the painter, works step by step. He cannot teach his techniques easily to others. But it is possible to learn from a good novel how to write. The reader will realize that a writer's excellence is 'a question of degree, a matter of delicacy'.

Paragraph : 6

Besant has put forward certain general laws of fiction which it appears is difficult to oppose. His first law is that the characters that a novelist creates must be 'real and such as might be met within 'actual life'. Henry James objects to Besant's concept of reality. He says that it is difficult to measure the reality of a character. Don Quixote and Micawber are utterly different from each other. But each is real in his own way. Reality has, a myriad forms. Some flowers have a strong odour and some other flowers are lacking in it. In the same way some characters are real and some are not.

Henry James attacks Besant's notion that a novelist should derive his material from his personal experience and that he should not barge into areas with which he is not personally acquainted. For example, a young lady brought up in a quiet village should not undertake to describe garrison life because it lies outside her purview. Henry James says that a sensitive novelist's experience is like a huge spider-web that catches even a tiny particle. He cites the examples of a lady novelist who caught a fleeting glimpse, while ascending a staircase, of some young Protestants seated round a finished meal. This momentary glance fed her imagination and enabled her to present a realistic picture of the French Protestant Movement. Great novelists are not tied down to the narrow realm of personal experiences. They move from the personal to the impersonal, from the seen to the unseen and from the particular to the universal.

Paragraph: 7

Besant asks the novelist to take notes. But James's contention is that it cannot be said in advance what notes to take. Life is vast and there is no manual to guide the novelist as to what matters are worth noticing, Henry James's point is that the novelist has to take a great many notes out of which to select a few. But the main problem is how to work up the knot and transform them into art.

Next, Henry James examines Besant's statement that characters 'must be clear in outline'. There are sharp differences of opinion regarding what contributes towards

this end. Some feel that it is dialogue that creates a sound character. Some attach importance to incidents. There are critics who swear by 'description'. Henry James is of the opinion that the three components of fiction-description, dialogue and incident-cannot be put into water-tight compartments. In a good novel, they all melt into one another. For James, even a woman resting her hands on a table and the church because he has not enough faith is also an incident, even though it may not rouse the reader's attention. According to Henry James, it is not proper to divide novels into novels that have life and novels that are lifeless.

Paragraph : 8

There are many conventional categories of novels such as romances, novels of incident, novels of character, etc. Henry James calls these classifications 'clumsy separations' made by critics and readers to suit their own convenience. Besant has created a new category called 'the Modern English Novel, James says that it is not clear whether this new type is based on didactic or historical factors. According to James, calling certain novels romances, like Hawthorne calling his novel about Blithedale a romance is also unwarranted. The only effect of such a title is to evoke a pleasant response from the reader. James says that there are no such categorizations in French and yet very good novels have been written in that language. Every novelist grapples with a *donnee* or idea. Some novelists 'execute' the idea successfully. That is, they turn the idea into art. Some novelists fail to do so. Flaubert deals with a servant girl's love for a parrot but fails to make it artistic. The Russian novelist Turgenev, on the other hand, succeeds in turning his subject of a dumb and deaf serf's love for a lap-dog into splendid art.

Paragraph : 9

Henry James says that, even though he attaches a great deal of importance to 'execution' he would not minimize the importance of the idea or the subject of a novel. He would like a novelist to choose as rich a subject as possible. James says that none of our sophisticated judgements can invalidate the primitive test based on liking or disliking a work of art. An artist's primary responsibility is to see to it that his work

is likeable. James admits that reader's tastes are different from one another. For example, some readers like a novel because it is quiet and some other readers dislike it because it is not bustling enough. The implication is that it is difficult to write a novel that pleases all tastes.

Paragraph : 10

As for readers' likes and dislikes the French novelist Emile Zola says that there are certain which readers ought to like and which they can be made to like. Henry James disagrees with this view. He says that readers like novels that are closely related to life. This relation is of many kinds. Some people speak of the relationship between art and life as fictitious. They feel that the novelist does not reflect the things surrounding us but alters them. Henry James says that there is 'truth' in the novels that present life as it is 'without rearrangement'. Novels which alter life with ingenuity, present not life but only a substitute, a compromise and convention. The life presented in fiction should include the ugly and the disagreeable also. Many people want art to give a rosy picture of life that would be acceptable to Mrs. Grundy. Henry James objects to such a selective approach that excludes harsh, unpalatable matters, selective art is like the sticks kept in public gardens, forbidding people to walk on grass, touch flowers or remain after dark. The great novel includes all life. The province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision.

Paragraph : 11

Some critics attach primary importance to the story of a novel and some others to the way it is treated. Henry James says that both these aspects are important. They 'Permeate and Penetrate' each other and are as inseparable as needle and thread. The writer of an entertaining article in the Pall Mall Gazette admires the story of a novel entitled *Margot la Balafree* which deals with the heroic adventures of a lady and rejects a tale which deals with certain Bostonian, nymphs cold towards English dukes for psychological reasons. The critic says that stories without adventures are not fit subjects for novels.

Check Your Progress Question

5. Henry James disagrees with _____'s opinion.

Henry James curtly retorts that when stories 'without matrimony, or celibacy, or cholera, or hydropathy, or jansenism are all fit subjects for novels, stories without adventures also lend themselves to novelistic treatment. As for the story of Bostonian ladies rejecting English dukes for psychological reasons, the critic may dismiss it as lacking an adventure but the psychologically inclined Henry James is thrilled by this story and describes it as 'an object adorable' which will inspire him to, titanesque efforts'. Henry James is quick to point out that he is not averse to tales of adventures, James likes it because 'it succeeds in what it attempts'. James refers to the psychological novel *Cherie* which deals with a young girl broken-hearted because nobody would marry her. Though psychologically treated *Cherie* is an artistic failure and so James does not like it. He likes George Eliot's novels not only because they are psychological but also because they are artistically successful.

Paragraph : 12

Besant says that a novelist should have a 'conscious moral purpose'. Henry James's contention is that the English novelist has not the moral courage to face certain subjects. James's feeling is that English novelists shy away from sexual problems. They do not frankly discuss in print what they feel to be a part of life. The absence of discussion is a symptom of moral diffidence and not of moral passion.

Paragraph : 13

Finally Henry James says that the aspiring novelist enjoys 'innumerable opportunities'. Other artists are hampered by rigid conditions. But the only condition governing the novelist is that he be sincere. All life belongs to the novelist. He need not confine himself to limited areas nor need he turn from earthly to spiritual matters. The field of fiction is so very wide that it can accommodate contrary geniuses such as Alexandre Dumas and Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and Gustave Flaubert. The budding English novelist should avoid shallow optimism and cultivate 'a wide knowledge' and be 'as complete as possible'.

3.6 Summation

Henry James's theory of the novel played a considerable part in the definition of the new conventions of the modernist novel. The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life. A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life. History is also allowed to represent life. James feels that it is the duty of the modern novelist to free the novel from the restrictions imposed on it by the nineteenth century novelistic conventions. The novel is the literary form able to deal with "all particles of the multitudinous life" in a way that can hardly be called dogmatic. In this respect, James sees in the novel "the most magnificent form of art."

3.7 Answers to CYP Questions

1. Henry James
2. Dickens, Thackeray
3. Besant
4. Philosopher, painter
5. Emilie Zola

3.8 Question

1. Henry James' contribution to the theory of the modernist novel with special reference to 'The Art of Fiction'.

3.9 For Further Reading

1. Studies in American Literature – Jagdish Chander, Narindar S. Pradhan
2. Cavalcade of the American Novel - Wajenknecht Edward

Unit – 4 A

Space for Hints

RAVEN

- E.A. Poe

4.1 Introduction

'Raven' is the best known poem written by Edgar Allen Poe in conformity with his theory of poetic composition. It is the one upon which his fame rests. Its theme is a subject favourite with Poe – the grief of a bereaved lover for the death of his beautiful wife. An eerie atmosphere is created in the beginning, and it is sustained to the end of the poem. The refrain 'Never more' adds intensity to the uncanny atmosphere and also to the symbolic significance of the poem. The poem is an idealization of his wife Virginia Clemm and the poem illustrates Poe's definition of poetry as "rhythmic creation of beauty."

4.2 Unit Objectives

- to introduce the poetic genius of the American poet Edgar Allen Poe
- Evolution of thought in 'Raven'
- Symbolism and felicity of expression as expressed in 'Raven'

4.3 Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Unit objectives
- 4.3 Unit structure
- 4.4 Theme and Subject-matter
- 4.5 Summary of the poem
- 4.6 Notes
- 4.7 As a perfectly constructed poem
- 4.8 Summation
- 4.9 Answers to CYP Questions

4.10 Questions

4.11 For Further Reading

4.4 Theme and Subject - Matter

The subject of this poem is not a raven but the death of a woman, with whom the speaker in the poem was in love, and the consequent grief and sense of loss of the speaker. The speaker is a young student deeply interested in scholarly studies. His beloved used to visit him in his chamber where he now sits in a sad mood because she is no more in this world. The night is stormy. A raven which has escaped from the custody of its owner, is seeking shelter from the violence of the storm. The time is midnight. The raven flutters its wings against the window of the student's chamber and the student opens the door, thinking that some passing traveller has come for shelter. Finding nobody outside, the student turns to the window, and sees a raven outside. He now opens the window, and the raven enters the chamber and perches itself on a statue of pallas lying close to the chamber-door.

The student playfully asks the raven its name whereupon the raven utters the word "Nevermore". Actually, "Nevermore" is the only word which the raven has learnt and which therefore it always utters whenever spoken to. Accordingly, the raven utters the same word "Nevermore" every time the scholar speaks to it. The scholar, whose heart is burdened with the grief of his beloved's premature death, seeks some consolation or relief in his misery; and therefore he asks the raven if he would someday meet his beloved in the other world and clasp her in his arms. The student expects that some encouraging answer might come from the raven, but the raven, which knows only one word, utters the same word "Nevermore" in reply to even this question.

The student becomes furious at the same negative reply given by the raven even to this crucial question asked by him. He now orders the raven to leave his chamber, but the raven continues to sit on the bust of pallas. The student feels that his grief would never end. The raven's reply of "Nevermore" even to his all-important

Check Your Progress Question

1. The raven sits on the statue of _____.
2. The words uttered by Raven are _____.

and supreme question produces in him the thought that there is no life after death, and that his hope of meeting his beloved in another world has therefore no validity.

4.5 Summary of the poem

Stanzas 1-5, One night, when a young student was mediating upon a volume of ancient, forgotten learning, he heard a gentle tapping at his chamber door. The student got the impression that some visitor was knocking, it was a gloomy December night. The coals in the fireplace had already burnt themselves out. The student was in a sorrowful mood because he had lost his beloved, Lenore, who had died a premature death. The death of Lenore, "the rare and radiant maiden", had come as a great blow to the student. He knew that she had left this world for ever. But the tapping at the door produced a vague feeling in him that it might be Lenore standing outside. At the same time the thought came to him that it was not his beloved but somebody else who needed shelter from the storm which was blowing outside. The student then opened the door and said that he was sorry for having delayed the opening of the door, and that the delay was due to the fact that he had been happing. However, the student found nobody at the door. There was only darkness outside, and nothing more. The student spoke once more, this time only whispering the name of Lenore. In reply to his whispering this name, he heard an echo of what he had spoken. The echo repeated the name of Lenore.

Stanza 6-8

The student now turned back into his chamber. His heart was in a state of profound grief because of the loss which he had suffered by the death of his beloved Lenore. Soon he again heard a tapping. It then occurred to him that it was the window from where the sound came. He could not understand who was tapping at the window. Perhaps it was only the wind striking against the window-pane. The student opened the window shutter. Thereupon a majestic looking raven entered the chamber, fluttering its wings. The raven perched itself upon a bust of pallas lying close to the chamber-door. The raven made no effort to introduce itself to its host who had allowed it to enter the chamber. The student felt somewhat amused by the raven's

informal entry into the chamber, and by its grave and stern bearing. Prompted by his fancy, the student asked the raven what its name was. The raven replied, "Nevermore".

Stanza 9-10

The student felt simply amazed to find that the raven could actually speak. He had asked the question playfully, not at all anticipating a reply. But he was surprised, by the promptness with which the raven had given its name. It seemed to the student that no human being had ever had the kind of experience which he (student) was having. It was indeed something unprecedented that a bird should have the name "Nevermore". The raven had spoken just that one word, and had said nothing more. To these words uttered by the student, a reply came from the raven; and the reply was "Nevermore". It now became clear to the student that the raven had learnt just this word "Nevermore", and naturally-uttered this word every time somebody spoke to it.

Stanza 11-12

The student now began to meditate upon the word "Nevermore" which the raven had learnt by heart. This word was the raven's only stock and store; and the raven had learnt this word from its owner who had undoubtedly suffered some misfortune and who had therefore taught only this mournful word to his pet bird. There was a feeling of amusement also in the student's meditations. Smiling, he pulled a cushioned seat close to the bust of Pallas on which sat the raven. He gave free reins to his fancy, wondering what this bird of ill omen signified. In its appearance the raven was grim, ugly, and ghastly. The traditional belief was that the raven was a bird of ill omen; and here was a raven uttering the word "Nevermore" whenever spoken to.

Stanza -13

As the student sat speculating upon the raven and the word "Nevermore", it seemed to him that the fiery eyes of the raven were penetrating his bosom and reaching his heart. The word "Nevermore" repeatedly spoken by the raven had a

relevance to scholar's own situation because his beloved would come to see him nevermore.

Stanza -14

Then it seemed to the student that the air in the room had been perfumed by some unknown agency, perhaps the air had been perfumed by the angels who had brought a burning censer with them invisibly into the chamber. Speaking aloud to himself the student said that God had sent some of the angels into his chamber in order to provide him with some comfort in his grief at the death of his beloved Lenore. Perhaps the perfume brought by the angels was a drug which would make him fall asleep and forget his memories of Lenore. Continuing to speak aloud, the student said to himself, "Forget your beloved Lenore by inhaling this sleep inducing perfume". To these words spoken by the student, a reply came from the raven, and the reply once again was "Nevermore".

Stanza -15

Addressing the raven, the student asked whether it was a bird or a devil. He called the raven a "thing of evil" because it had made an evil prophecy. He asked whether the raven was a tempter, sent to lure him to evil, or whether it was just a bird which had been driven into his chamber by the violence of the storm. He then went on to ask the raven if there was at all any balm in Hades which could soothe his grief. To all this, the raven replied, "Nevermore".

Stanza 16

The student then repeated that the raven was a thing of evil because it had made an evil prophecy. And then he asked the raven if his sorrow-laden soul could meet his beloved, the Saintly Lenore, in heaven, But the raven again answered, "Nevermore".

Check Your Progress Question

3. He felt that the air in the room has been perfumed by _____

4. Who is called 'a thing of evil'?

Stanza 17-18

The student now became furious. The raven had answered all his questions with the disappointing and depressing word "Nevermore". It seemed to the student that the raven had thrust its beak into his heart. He then called upon the raven to quit his chamber, and go back into the storm and the darkness of the night. The student said that the bird had spoken a lie and that he could not tolerate its presence in his chamber any longer. But the raven's reply once more was "Nevermore". The raven continued to sit on the bust of Pallas. The raven's eyes resembled the eyes of a demon who is lost in his own dreams. The lamp-light was throwing the raven's shadow on the floor of the chamber; and the student felt that his soul, which lay in that shadow on the floor, would be lifted from there nevermore.

4.6 Notes

Dreary (Line-1) - desolate; uninteresting. Weary-tired.

Quaint (Line-2) - Strange, Curious-exciting curiosity, Lore-Learning

Napping (Line-3) - Feeling drowsy. Tapping-knocking. Rapping-knocking
Bleak (Line-7) - dim; depressing; semi-dark

Ember (Line-8) - burning coal. Its ghost - its shadow.

Surcease (Line-10) - Cessation; suspension; respite

Purple (Line - 13) - crimson; of a deep-red colour

presently (Line - 19) - soon

implore (Line - 20) - entreat; request

And the stillness gave no token (line - 27) - The perfect silence, which prevailed in the darkness outside, gave no indication at all of who had knocked the door.

Window lattice (Line - 33) - window - frame

With many a flirt and flutter (Line – 27) - with many movements of the wings, and with many sounds coming therefrom.

Stately (Line 38) - majestic.

Raven - a kind of bird, much resembling the crow, regarded as a bird of ill-omen.

The Saintly days - the pious days.

Of Yore - of ancient times; of olden times.

The phrase “of Yore” is commonly used to mean “Olden times.”

obeisance (Line – 40) - bearing; with mein of Lord and Lady – with a dignified bearing like that of a lord or a lady.

perched - sat down.

Pallas (Line – 41) - In ancient Greek mythology, Pallas was the name of the goddess of wisdom. The bust of pallas has appropriately been introduced into the poem because the lover, being a scholar would naturally be a disciple of pallas and would worship her, just as a Hindu scholar in India would worship Saraswathi who is the goddess of learning in Hindu mythology.

Beguilling (Line – 43) - entertaining; gratifying; pleasing.

This ebon bird - the raven which is of a black colour.

Ebony is black, and so is the raven.

Decorum (Line 43) - good behavior; good manners.

Countenance (Line 44) - Face or the expression on the face; look

Crest (Line – 45) - top of the head

shorn and shaven - devoid of plumage.

Craven - coward; abject and beggarly

Ghastly grim (Line – 46) - Frighteningly serious and stern.

Plutonian shore (Line-47) - The shore of the kingdom of death, "Plutonian" is the adjective form of "Pluto". Pluto is the name of the king of Hades which is the world of the dead, and where only spirits and ghosts dwell.

Quoth (Line - 48) - Said, The word "quoth" is now obsolete. It is no longer used; but it was very common in olden days.

The sculptured bust (line 53) - the statue which was embellished with carvings.

Ungainly (line - 49) - Ugly, unhandsome fowl - bird

placid (Line- 55) - tranquil ; calm and peaceful.

Outpour (Line- 56) - utter.

its only stock and store (Line-62) - the only vocabulary of the raven; the only word which

the raven can utter.

Whom unmerciful Disaster / followed fast (Lines 63-64) - the raven seemed to have been the pet bird of a man who had become the victim of some great misfortune, and who had therefore taught the raven a melancholy word "Nevermore" which suited that man's circumstances.

The dirges (Line- 65) - The funeral songs ; songs marking some death, in this case the death of that unlucky man's hope.

Burden - refrain. The burden or the refrain is the line or the words which are repeated at the end of every stanza in a poem. In the poem before us, the burden or the refrain consists of a single word which is "Nevermore"

I betook myself to linking / Fancy unto fancy (Lines 69-70) - I got busy mentally, connecting one fanciful notion with another fanciful notion; I occupied myself in conceiving various fanciful thoughts, each thought suggesting another.

Ominous bird - bird of ill Omen

of Yore - of olden times; in the remote past.

Gaunt (Line-71) - thin and lean.

Croaking (Line-72) - uttering. The word "Croak" is used for the sound which a raven produces

Fowl (Line - 74) - bird.

Whose fiery eyes Core - the burning eyes of the raven penetrated my heart to its very centre.

Divining (Line-75) - guessing; lost in conjectures.

Reclining (Line-76) - bending; leaning restfully.

Gloated over (Line-76) - show upon. Here the word "gloat" has been used to mean "shine".

She shall press, ah, nevermore (Line78) - The beloved, Lenore, would never again visit this chamber because she is dead. She would never again sit on the cushioned seat which used to be pressed down under the weight of her body whenever she sat on it. This is a highly suggestive line which brings before us the lover's days of joy and happiness when Lenore used to visit him in his chamber. Those days have now come to an end because of the death of his beloved Lenore.

Methought (Line - 79) - I thought

denser - thicker.

Seraphim (Line - 80) - angels. Seraphim is the plural form of seraph. The word "Serāph" means an angel; and "seraphim" therefore would mean angels.

Wretch I cried (Line-81) Here the lover addresses himself. He addresses himself as an unlucky or miserable fellow for whom some aid has come from heaven. The aid is being offered by an invisible angel who has brought a sweet smell which would send the lover to sleep and make him forget his grief over the death of his beloved.

Respite (Line-82) - the interval of rest or relief.

Nepenthe - a drug producing forgetfulness of grief; a drug which sends a man to sleep and makes him forget his sorrows.

Quaff (Line - 83) - drink ; swallow. The student urges himself to drink this drug and become forgetful of his grief.

Tempter (Line-87) - one who tempts a man to follow an evil path.. The student imagines that the raven has been sent by some invisible power to mislead or misguide him or to due him to take some wrong step.

Undaunted (Line - 87) - unafraid

enchanted - spell- bound, under some magic influence.

Gilead (Line - 89) - Hades; the kingdom of death; the under - world where ghosts and spirits dwell.

Aiden (Line-93) - Eden ; paradise

Clasp (Line - 94) - embrace,

A sainted maiden - a pious damsel.

Radiant maiden (Line - 95) - bright damsel.

Upstarting (Line 98) - getting up.

Night's plutonian shore - the kingdom of death where darkness prevails and which is governed by Pluto, the king of Hades.

And my soul.... nevermore (Line 107-08) - Here the student or the lover says that his soul would never be lifted from the shadow falling upon the floor. The shadow is that of the raven and the lover imagines that his heart, which lies in that shadow, would never be lifted from there. What he means to say is that his heart is doomed to everlasting misery, and the he would get relief or comfort nevermore.

4.7 A perfectly constructed poem about the death of a beautiful Woman

"*The Raven*" is a narrative-cum-meditative poem, the story of which proceeds step by step in a straight line. In his essay "*The philosophy of Composition*", Poe himself described the successive stages of his planning the poem and then writing it, though it is doubtful whether Poe's account is an authentic one or just a hoax. Whatever might have been the procedure followed by Poe, the resulting poem shows a compactness of construction and a fine sense of form. The narrative progresses at a pace which is neither slow nor swift; and the climax is reached in the stanza(xvi) in which the raven gives the reply "Nevermore" even to the lover's question whether he would meet his beloved in heaven after his death. There is no digression in the poem, and there is no deviation at all from the line of the narrative. A feeling of suspense is aroused in us at the very outset, and then the suspense goes on increasing till the climax where the lover's grief reaches its height because the lover's only hope in life is shattered by the raven's negative reply. Technically, "*The Raven*" is a perfect poem which shows Poe as a craftsman at his very best.

The atmosphere of melancholy and sadness

The tone of the poem is throughout melancholy, though the melancholy is relieved at one point by a few amusing touches. The student feels somewhat amused on seeing the raven which seems to him to have entered his chamber with a lordly bearing, and also when, in reply to the student's first question, the raven gives his name as "Nevermore". With the exception of this brief moment of mirth, the lover in the poem remains indescribably sad. In fact, the poem is enveloped in an atmosphere of sadness. It is a touching, moving, and poignant poem. Poe was not far wrong when

Check Your Progress Question

5. There is no
_____ in the
poem.

he said that the death of a beautiful woman was the most poetic of all subjects. The poem ends on a note of anguish because the raven's reply of "Nevermore" has destroyed the lover's only remaining hope in the world, that he would be reunited with his beloved in heaven. It now seems to the lover that there is no basis for his belief in immortality and in a life after death.

The symbolism in the poem

In the essay "*The philosophy of composition*" Poe tells us that he intended the raven in this poem to serve as an emblem of mournful and never-ending remembrance. Traditionally, the raven is a bird of ill Omen; but Poe invests the raven with a different significance though, as he himself says this significance becomes clear only at the end of the poem. However, Poe also retains the evil associations of the raven. It is sent to him as a tempter to seduce his mind and lead him astray. We may also regard this poem as symbolizing Poe's rejection of the belief in immortality. The bust of Pallas also serves a symbolic purpose. It symbolizes the life of learning into which the lover has plunged in order to drown his sorrow.

The felicity of diction

A most striking merit of the poem is its felicity of diction. Poe's choice of words, and his combination of words into phrases and lines, appeal greatly to our aesthetic sense. At the very outset, the lover is described as "pondering over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore" then the lover describes his lost beloved as "the rare and radiant maiden". The aptness of the words and the phrases used in the following lines is yet another example of the same art:

*Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of Yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a
minute stopped or stayed he;
But with me in of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door,
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just
above my chamber door.*

In these lines we not only have an exquisite selection of words but also a most wonderful, and highly pleasing example of alliteration as well as internal rhyming. Indeed, the poem abounds in such effects.

Versification; Music and Melody

In "*The philosophy of composition*", Poe tells us that, in the versification of this poem, he has aimed at originality, though it is not an originality of rhythm or metre. His originality, he says, lies in the combination of lines into stanzas. As for the music and the melody of this poem, Poe here makes the fullest use of all available technical devices to endow his poem with an exquisite singing quality. Lyricism generally lies in an intensity of emotion, in the flights of imagination and in melodic effect

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each

purple curtain

Thrilled me-filled me with fantastic terrors

never felth before.

Here we have alliteration in the repetition of the "S" sound in the following words; silken, sad uncertain, rustling; and we have alliteration in the use of the following words; filled, fantastic, felt, before. And of course, we have internal rhyming; silken, uncertain, curtain; and then; thrilled filled. Poe was a master of such effects. He was undoubtedly a superb craftsman. What a wonderful refrain he has chosen! It is a multipurpose refrain which serves as the right answer to every question asked by the lover. "Nevermore" is the right answer to the very first question which is, "Tell me what thy lordly, name is". And the same refrain serves as the right when lover asks if his sorrow laden soul would be re-united with his beloved Lenore in heaven.

A highly romantic poem

"*The Raven*" represents the high water-mark of romanticism in American Poetry. The imagined situation; the fanciful thoughts of the lover; the intensity of the

lover's emotion; the felicities of word and phrase; the melody and the music all these qualities combine to create a masterpiece of romantic poetry. Rightly did it become the most famous of Poe's poems.

What the critics say

The Critics sum up the apparent meaning of the poem with the following words.

When Poe came to the most celebrated of his poems, he chose to explain his method of operation. "*The philosophy of composition*" deals not only with the genesis of "*The Raven*" but also with the meaning of its symbols. The poem, of course has a melancholy atmosphere which derives from what Poe's theory considers being the most poetic subject - the death of a beautiful woman. Poe, who is fond of repeating feminine names, gives to this deceased woman the name "Lenore". The poem turns on the questioning of the raven by the bereaved lover, and the answer to every question is "Nevermore". The climax of the poem comes when the raven responds with "Nevermore" to the questions whether the lover and his mistress would even in some future life, be reunited.

After summing up the poem in this manner, the critics proceed to state the poem's symbolic meaning. According to them, the raven is the principal symbol, being a bird of ill Omen. Then the bust of pallas is also a symbol. The bust represents the life of learning into which the lover in the poem had plunged himself in order to drown his sorrow. Even the word "Nevermore" is according to critics, a symbol. This word symbolizes the universal tragedy of mankind.

4.8 Summation

The poem 'Raven' depicts the agony of bereaved lover whose feverishly mournful and never-ending remembrance of the departed Lenore makes a luxury of the agony. The substance of the poem is what the soul of the lover attains through the agony and not the agony itself. The immediate interest in the plot centers around the experience of the bereaved student who is found in his well-finished study. The things

there retain for him memories of his departed belong. The bird's monotonous intoning of one senseless word drives the student into a reverie.

4.9 Model Annotation

*And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each
purple curtain
Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors
never felt before.*

Poe's poem *The Raven*

The poet is obsessed with memories of his sweet heart Lenore. He fancies that (the spirit of) Lenore is walking into his room, with her silken dress rustling. The rustling of the window curtain reminds him of the way Lenore's dress rustled whenever she walked into his room. This thought not only thrills him but also terrifies him.

Here we have alliteration in the repetition of the "S" sound in the following words : Silken, sad, uncertain, rustling, and we have alliteration in the use of the following words filled, fantastic, felt, before. And of course, we have internal rhyming; silken, uncertain, curtain; and then; thrilled, filled. Poe was a master of such effects. He was undoubtedly a superb craftsman.

4.10 Answers to CYP Questions

1. pallas 2. Never more 3. Angels 4. Raven
5. digression

4.11 Annotation Passages

1. Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster.
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore.
2. And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.

Eagerly I wished the narrow; - vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow - sorrow for the lost Lenore.

4.12 Questions

1. Poe's analysis of *The Raven* in *The philosophy of composition*
2. A critical appreciation of *The Raven*
3. Write a note on the symbols in *The Raven*.
4. Give an account of the illusions and delusions in the poem *The Raven*

4.13 For Further Reading

1. Charles Feidelson : Symbols and American Literature
2. Edward H. Davidson: Poe: A Critical Study
3. Patrick F. Quinn : The French Face of Poe.

Unit – 4 B

Space for Hints

PASSAGE TO INDIA

-Walt Whitman

4.1 Introduction

Walt Whitman is a representative poet of America. In his poems, he reflected all the richness of life. He is greatly influenced by Indian especially Hindu and Buddhist thought, in his concept of man, self, soul and immortality. Tagore went to the extent of saying that no other American poet understood so accurately the spirit of oriental mysticism as did Walt Whitman. The Hindu doctrine of illusion or Maya also gets its due in his poems.

4.2 Unit Objectives

- Walt Whitman as a poet and legend
- Values and aspirations of Americans as reflected in his poems

4.3 Unit Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Unit Objectives
- 4.3 Unit Structure
- 4.4 Life and Works
- 4.5 Notes and References
- 4.6 Critical Appreciation
- 4.7 Summation
- 4.8 Model Annotation
- 4.9 Answers to CYP Questions
- 4.10 Questions
- 4.11 Annotation Passages

4.4 Life and Works

Walt Whitman was born on May 31, 1819, in west Hills, Long Island. His mother, Lousia Van Velsor, and his father Walter, were semi literature. They had nine children, of whom two were mentally unfit. The father earned a meager living, first at farming, then at labouring, building, and carpentry. The mother was closer to her son, Walt, than the father. Her interest in Quakerism was the only religious inheritance the family passed on to the future poet. As he later came to romanticise his "Quaker" childhood, his use of "thee" and "thou" in his poetry, his reference to the months by numbers can be traced to his Quaker background.

Boyhood and Education :

The Poet's childhood was lived in alternation between the farm on 'Long Island' and the streets of the neighbouring city of Brooklyn. "Both the world of nature and the world of man impinged forcefully on the young boy's imagination, and the nature poet denied neither but exultingly embraced both". In his poem, "There was a child went forth Whitman" gives us a glimpse of the domestic scene of his youth.

Career as a journalist

It was natural that Whitman, with his genius and metaphysical inclinations, should have drifted into journalism, a profession which could make some demands on his natural abilities. *The Long Islander*, *The New York Aurora*, and *The Brooklyn Daily Evening Star* were some of the journals, he worked.

His Dream of America

Although Whitman was away from his native town for only about four months, his imagination was permanently liberated from the provincialism of the narrow Long Island world.

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

1. *The Long Islander* is a _____ in which he worked.

"Leaves of Grass: The first Edition

Whitman published the first Edition of "*the Leaves of Grass*" on July 4, 1855. He was thirty six years old then.

A proposal of Marriage :

"There is no record that Whitman ever proposed marriage to any woman; However, there is a record showing that a proposal of marriage was made to him by a woman".

"Speciman Days"

Shortly after he took up residence in Cameden, Whitman found the best treatment for his maladies on the friend's secluded farm called Timber creek.

4.5 Notes and References

My days - my daily experiences, my day-to-day life.

Light works - scientific devices that lighten man's labour.

Outvied - outshone

the Suez canel- Canel dug between Black sea and Mediterrarian

unfathomed - not understood

retrospect - view of past events

teeming - full of

projectile - something shot forward from a gun.

Impelled - urged

utterly formed - completely formed

myths fables - puranas

of-old	-	of the past
fables immortal	-	immortal fables
burnished	-	polished
fashioned	-	produced
You too... sing!-		sing you too with joy
van	-	the leading part of an army or fleet
buffers	-	small, steep hills on plains.
scan	-	see closely
wind around	-	go around
cloudlets	-	small clouds
chief historian	-	main actor
caroling	-	singing

4.6 Critical Appreciation

Whitman is a true representative of America. In all his poems Whitman reflects the values and aspirations of Americans. He is therefore, regarded as the 'organ voice' of America. Thoreau welcomed Whitman's '*Leaves of Grass*' as very brave and American.

W.D.O. Canner says :

To understand Greece, study the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, study *Leaves of Grass* to understand America.

*I hear America singing, the varied
Carole I hear. Those of mechanics, each
One singing his as should be blithe and strong.*

Check Your Progress Question

2. In
W.D.O.Canner's
opinion study
to
understand
America.

In thus describing pulsating life with all its multitudinous variety, Whitman is like Chaucer whose *Canterbury Tales* presents a cross-section of the England of his time in the same way as Whitman does of America.

Whitman describes a variety of American landscapes also. The northern ocean; the mid-western prairies and the long coast line of the Pacific are some of the places accurately described in his poems. He is happy that democracy has taken deep roots in America and yet is undecided whether to support the individual or the masses. He expresses his vacillation in the first poem of *Leaves of Grass*, entitled *One's Self! Sing!*

One's self I sing, a smile separate person.

Yet utter the word Democratic, the word EnMasse.

Whitman respects and recognizes two kinds of attachments the physical love between the sexes which he calls 'amateness' and the love between males which he calls 'adhesive'. He recklessly glorifies adhesive love in the 'calamus' poem, which led many critics to brand him a homosexual.

My gait is no fault finder's or rejected gait

I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

'The passage to India,' first published in 1868, is a long poem in nine sections. Its dominant theme is spirituality, and hence its appeal has been universal. Three important events of 1869 and 1870 fired Whitman's imagination and inspired the poem. The first was the completion of a railroad across North America from East to West. The second was the laying of the transatlantic cable.

The passage symbolizes, first, the physical exploration carried on by sailors and navigators adventures and explores through railroad and steamship. Fourthly it also symbolised spiritual exploration leading to a merger of the individual soul with the divine.

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

3. 'The Passage to India' is a long poem in _____ sections.

4. The dominant theme of this poem is _____.

4.7 Summing Up

"Passage to India" takes as its starting point three achievements of the age: the laying of the Atlantic cable, the opening of the Suez Canal, and the linking of the Union and Pacific railroads. India is presented as a fabled land that inspired Columbus to seek a westward route from Europe to India, a route that ended up with his discovery of the Americas. While India is celebrated as an antique land, rich in history, America is celebrated as a force of modernization. But on another level, as one critic observed, the poem is about the "human soul's triumph over Time, Space, and Death."

4.8 Model Annotation

*In the Old World the east the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires;*

In *Passage to India*, Whitman says that the feats of modern engineers are far superior to the seven wonders of ancient times. He is particularly proud of modern scientific achievements such as the Suez Canal of the east, the railroad linking the east and west of North America and the laying of transatlantic cable in the seas.

The main difference between ancients and modern poets is that the former confined themselves to such matters as nature, but the latter have widened their horizon by singing of the masterly achievements of scientists and engineers.

*I see the procession....
.....leading the van.*

Whitman describes the opening of the Suez Canal when a procession of sixty eight vessels headed by Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon passed through the canal. The poet fancies himself on board, a ship, watching fascinating landscapes and gigantic machines which were used to dredge the canal. For Whitman machines also have strange beauty.

4.9 Answers to CYP Questions

1. Journal 2. Leaves of Grass 3. Nine 4. spirituality

4.10 Question

1. Critical appreciation of the poem 'Passage to India'.

4.11 Annotation Passages

1. *The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect!*
 The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!
 The past—the infinite greatness of the past!
 For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?
2. *A worship new I sing,*
 You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,
 Your engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,
 You, not for trade or transportation only,
 But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.
3. *The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,*
 The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
 The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
 The lands to be welded together.

4.12 For Further Reading

- | | | |
|---|---|------------------|
| 1. Walt Whitman | : | Geofre Dutton. |
| 2. Walt Whitman and the New Poetry | : | Amy Lowell |
| 3. Walt Whitman as Man, Poet and Legend | : | E.Ellision Allen |

Unit – 5 A

Emily Dickinson's Poems

5.1 Introduction

Among the writers of America, Emily Dickinson is such an interesting and puzzling study as woman and as poet. Her poems find their proper and congenial association in the twentieth century at least in many aspects of their style and form. She is influenced by Emerson's freedom of vision and expression. But she is not belonging to any school. Most of her poems are autobiographical in the sense that they remain true to an imagined experience in every poem. She dealt with a number of themes in her poetry – nature, love, pain and suffering, death and immortality, God and Christ, poetry as an art, and so on.

5.2 Unit Objectives

- Emily Dickinson's conventional approach to Nature
- Her poetic insight to the nature of death
- Technical imperfection of her verse

5.3 Unit Structure

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Unit Objectives

5.3 Unit Structure

5.4 Life and Works

5.5 Emily Dickinson as a poet

5.6 I felt a funeral in my brain

5.7 The Soul Selects Her own Society

5.8 A Bird Came Down the Walk

5.9 Because I could not stop for Death

5.10 Annotations

5.10.1 A Bird came down the walk : Model Annotation

5.10.2 Annotation Passages

5.10.3 I felt a Funeral in my Brain : Model Annotation

5.10.4 Annotation Passages

5.10.5 Because I Could Not Stop for Death: Model Annotation

5.10.6 Annotation Passages

5.11 Answers to CYP Questions

5.12 Questions

5.13 For Further Reading

5.4 Life and works

Birth and parentage

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830 in a small American town called Amherst, the population of which hardly, numbered three thousand people. Situated in the centre of a huge semi-circle of hills, this town was considered a beauty spot in the Connecticut River valley. Her father, Edward Dickinson, was a lawyer, a congressman, and a trustee and treasurer of Amherst College. Throughout his life Edward Dickinson was guided by a stern sense of duty, never allowing his emotions to interfere with his role as a responsible leader of the town. He ruled his house like an absolute monarch, rearing his children with a firm conviction that they would become Christian citizens.

Early years; withdrawal from Social life :

Emily was educated at home except for a year (1847) at Mount Holyoke female seminary, at South Hadley, hardly ten miles from Amherst. Emily probably had few male companions, although she enjoyed the company of Benjamin, F. Newton, who worked in her father's law office and who tried to guide her in her poetry and her reading. His death in 1853 left her shaken but probably more by the loss of a decent and sensitive friend than by that of a possible lover. A year later, while her father was in congress, she travelled to Washington. During this trip she

visited, Philadelphia where she met, and is believed to have fallen in love with, a married clergyman by the name of Charles Wadsworth. With this withdrawal into the warmth of her emotional innerness came the beginning of her real poetic productivity.

The death of her father :

When her father died in 1874 and her mother became paralysed a year later, she was scarcely seen any more. Indeed her father's death put the final seal on her seclusion. Throughout the remainder of her life, she never stopped recording the terrible sense of anguish that his death caused in her heart. By comparison, her mother remained a submissive, shadowy figure in the family, but Emily devotedly nursed her bed-ridden mother for seven years after the latter had become paralysed.

Elder brother, Austin :

Emily's elder brother Austin understood her better than any other member of the family. In the early 1850's Sue Gilbert, now Austin's wife, was Emily's close friend. But Sue's social and family interests, coupled with a detached, often critical attitude toward Emily, gradually caused a rift. Regardless of their changed relationship, Sue shared more of Emily's personal life and poetic hopes than any other single contemporary.

Younger Sister, Larinia :

Emily had a younger sister, Larinia. Aggressive and practical, as Emily Larinia spent her life protecting her sister's privacy and fulfilling her social obligations. After Emily's death in 1886, herself a spinster, as Emily had been, she forced the publication of her sister's poems. As the last member of her family she lived long enough to see the poems achieve popular success. During her own-life time she published just seven poems, and even these appeared anonymously.

Friendship :

In childhood and youth Emily Dickinson enjoyed the usual experiences of friendship. There were exchanges of mutual devotion with relations, sentimental

friendship with schoolmates, comradeship with young men, like that with a student in her father's law office, Ben Newton, who first guided her interests in literature. A far closer friend than Holland and more stimulating as an intellectual companion was Samuel Bowles, editor of the Republican which under his direction became one of the most influential newspapers in the country. Her life-long friendship with these men enriched the year of her seclusion by keeping her in touch with the world she had rejected. He had a varied career as a professional man of letters and a fighter for liberal causes. The chief significance of this particular intimacy was the fact that a successful author admired her works.

Possible love - affairs :

The themes of a large number of her poems, combined with the fact of her voluntary seclusion, has led to much speculation that she must have had an intense but unsuccessful love-affair. He was a judge of the supreme court of Massachusetts at the time, a distinguished and unusually attractive man. The other person widely regarded as a man she was in love with was Charles Wadsworth, pastor of a presbyterian church in Philadelphia throughout her maturity, except for the years 1862 -70 when he was in California. It is unfortunate that a relationship of such significance should remain so dark. He had the most attractive personality of all her friends, and a spirit most congenial to her own; he was, too, the nearest to her in age.

Uneventful life :

Miss Dickinson's life was perfectly devoid of outward event. She did not choose to avail herself of whatever social life was available to her. Such an attitude gradually made her life one of an almost complete solitude. "I do not go from home". By the time she was thirty, the habit of leading an isolated existence had become very strong, and a subject on which she was explicit and emphatic in her letters to F. H. Higginson.

A recluse by choice :

It is generally agreed that Miss Dickinson became a hermit by deliberate and conscious choice. "A recluse", wrote Higginson, "by temperament and habit, literally spending years without setting her foot beyond the doorstep, and many years during which her walks were strictly limited to her father's grounds. She was persuaded to print, during her life-time, three or four poems". As a young woman she is believed to have had several love-affairs but there is no evidence that any of them was serious. Emerson was at the height of his career, and living only sixty miles away: his poems appeared when she was seventeen. When she was twenty Hawthorne published the *Scarlet Letter*, and the *House of the Seven Gables* the year after, Poe died in 1849, and in 1850 was published the first collected edition of his poems. When she was twenty four, Thoreau's *Walden* appeared; when she was twenty five, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*.

Her deep interest in living :

By the end of the civil war, Miss Dickinson had passed through the crisis years of her life, which were also the year most productive of poetry. Much like other New England spinsters, she withdrew from contact with all except the members of her family and a group of close friends. But unlike other Spinsters, she continued to feel an ecstasy in the act of living, to think life still the "finest secret", to keep up her large correspondence, and to write twenty poems a year. She made new friend in the popular poet and novelist, Idelen Hunt Jackson. She was a great poet. Miss Dickinson's last and most important friend is Lord, a good friend of her father for many years. After the death of Lord's wife in 1877, their friendship developed into love. With his death the spring of Dickinson's life was gone. The discovery of Dickinson's tender feelings for Otis Lord, and his for her, had rendered her whole life more real, credible, and human.

He was "The first of my own friends", she said about Benjamin Newton who was her father's law student and with whom she was sharing her piercing love for truth in poetry when she was still in her eighteenth year. Newton was also her first

mentor, who gave her a copy of Emerson's poems. The second mentor was the man who created the crisis of Dickinson's life, in 1862, the miraculous year when she wrote 366 poems. It seems likely that she fell in love with him, he being unaware or carefully unconscious of her passion.

Her temperament

She talked to visitors through a half-closed door. She came to be regarded as an eccentric, if not cracked. But the fact remains that she grew up normally enough with good schooling, much letter-writing, boy-friends, gardening, and household work. Her day-to-day life cannot be understood in such simple terms as a neurotic withdrawal. She cooked and cleaned and gardened; she composed, drafting and revising, letters to a wide circle of friends. Such a rate of composition not only demands a heavy spending of psychic energy; it must have also yielded her "a radiant happiness" within the heart of her misery.

A "Private" Poet :

Up to the end, Emily Dickinson remained a 'private' poet. She preferred the poverty of the artist in her poetry, and not only unsold but uncreating to the investment of her immortal spirit in marketable product.

"publication is the auction
Of the mind of man."

Her attitude towards fame has been firmly defended by another critic as her deep-seated integrity and self-knowledge, the increasing eccentricity, the contentment with a minimum reception today while remaining confident that she is creating durable act.

The publication of her poems :

During her life-time those who knew of her believed her to be a shy, even when her poetry was first given to the world, in 1890. In 1924 Mrs. Martha Bianchi, Emily's niece published the complete poems of Emily Dickinson. In 1929 Mrs. Bianchi assisted by a collaborator In 1945 Mrs. Mable Yodd, a neighbour of the

Dickinson family, her daughter. This was finally supplied in 1955 by Thomas H. Johnson in the poems of Emily Dickinson in three volumes. Subsequently Johnson published revised edition, of the complete poems.

5.5 Emily Dickinson as a Poet

Poetry based on actual observations :

From her window she had caught suggestions that gave her a picture, a fancy, an image. A dead fly on the window-pane stirred her imagination. She saw the blue birds darting round, and these observations went into her verses. She wrote on sheets of note-paper, which she stitched together, depasting them in the drawers of her bureau; Sometimes the back of an envelope served her as well. The visible setting of her poems was the New England country-side the village, the garden, the household that she knew so well, a scene that she invested with magic so that the familiar objects became, potents and symbols.

Her poetic characteristics :

Miss. Dickinson lived in a world of paradox. For, while her eye was microscopic, her imagination dwelt with mysteries and grandeurs. The poems were fairy like in their shimmer and lightness, they moved like bees upon a raft of air. And yet, one felt behind them an energy of mind and spirit that only the rarest poets have possessed.

An obscure, lonely life :

America's greatest woman poet lived in complete obscurity in a small town. Nowhere but in a New England community could a woman be at once so unhappy, so alone and yet so spry and so articulate : So aware of the contiguity and inter-relatedness of this world and the next, Or, one might add so uneven. So unfinished, despite her genius.

Check Your Progress Question

1. _____ stirred her imagination?
2. Her poems were _____ in their shimmer and lightness.

Posthumous publication of her poems :

At her death Emily Dickinson left over a thousand unpublished poems. Only a few friends knew that she had written them. Many were, mere ideas for poems jotted on whatever scrap of paper came to hand. Others had been revised with some care. She died in 1886 at Amherst in the house where she was born. She had left word to have her poems burned.

Possible reasons for her withdrawal from life :

Exactly what led to Miss Dickinson's withdrawal from life has been explained in various ways by various biographers, most of whom have found evidence of an unhappy love - affair, though agreement has not been reached about even the identity' of the man she supposedly loved. Probably the most plausible version of her story is that written by George F. Whicher.

The Paradox of her personality :

What is even more puzzling than the details of her love is the paradox of her personality. Here is a child of New England Puritanism sternly brought up in a strict house-hold, shut off from much of life increasingly, retiring. But here also is a playful humorist, a passionate rebel, defiant in her feeling, thinking and expression.

The resemblance with Donne :

The uses Miss. Dickinson made of imperfect rhyme or eye rhyme, the liberties she took with grammar and rhythm, and in particular, her habit of packing her lines with cryptic meanings have endeared her to present day readers. Also her vivid imagination and her playful spirit made her as fond of poetic conceits as John Donne, idol of the moderns, had been in the seventeenth century.

The development of Miss Dickinson's Lyric talent :

We have in Johnson's edition of Emily Dickinson's poems as a complete record of the development of lyric talent as exists in literature. We ourselves can discover in the index to the three volumes, that her favourite subject was not death as

was wrongly supposed; for life, love and the soul are also recurring subjects. She is driven to the verge of sanity but manages to remain the observer and recorder of her extremity. Nature is no longer a friend, but often a hostile presence. Nature is a haunted house. And a truth even more terrible, the inmost self can be haunted.

Her genius :

At the highest summit of her art, she resembles no one. She began to cast forward toward the future: to produce, poems in which we recognise both the 'voyant' faculty of Rimbaud's feeling for the mystery and sacredness of the world.

Her subject matter:

Emily Dickinson's subject-matter might be sub-divided roughly as follows: natural description; the definition of moral experience; and mystical experience, or the definition of the experience of immortality. The second sub-division includes a great deal, and her best work falls within it. Her descriptive poems contain here, and there brilliant strokes.

Her mystical poems :

Poems dealing with mystical experience include a large number which attempt to express posthumous beauty, as if she were already familiar with it. The poems are invariably forced and somewhat theoretical; they are briskly clever, and lack of obscure, but impassioned conviction of the mystical poems of very; they lack the tragic finality, the haunting sense of human isolation in a foreign universe to be found in her greatest poems of which the explicit theme is a denial of this mystical trance.

Her tragic vision :

Although Emily Dickinson's achievement as a prosodist is substantial, it is her tragic vision which gives her a high rank as a poet. She knew that she could not penetrate the unknowable or comprehend the deepest mysteries, but she insisted on asking the questions. In her we see the anguish of the Shakespeare, who wrote *King Lear*.

The riddle of the universe unsolvable :

Emily Dickinson was an existentialist in a period of transcendentalism. Yet her judgement persistently asserts that neither intuition nor reason can solve the riddle of existence. She assesses the problems of anxiety and loneliness, the extremity of pain and its duration and redemptive quality and she thereby steadily participates in the issues of existing.

Her attitude to God :

In her mode of life Miss. Dickinson carried the doctrine of self-sufficient individualism farther than Thoreau carried it. In her poetry she carried it, with its accompanying moral mysticism, farther than Emerson.

In one of her poems she refers to God as "a noted clergyman" and on another occasion she salutes him as "burglar, banker, father" - a flippancy which might have annoyed even the most liberal of her contemporaries.

Her reverence for Nature :

Miss. Dickinson's opinion of the traditional, personal God, her real reverence - that made her a mystic poet of the finest kind, was reserved for Nature. Nature seemed to her a more obvious and more beautiful evidence of divine will than creeds and churches. Nature she saw, observed, and loved with a burning simplicity and passion which did not, however, exclude her very nimble sense of humour. Her nature poems however, are not the most revelatory or dramatically compulsive of her poems, nor are they, on the whole, the best. They are often of extraordinary delicacy; they nearly always give us, with deft brevity, the exact in terms of the quaint.

Her Metaphysical speculation and ironic introspection, stylistic characteristics :

Miss. Dickinson is at her best, most characteristic, and most profound. When she writes about eternity, we must turn to the remarkable range of metaphysical speculation and ironic introspection found in those sections of her books to which her

editors have given the headings life and time and eternity. She is often epigrammatic. Indeed she often carries the epigrammatic to the point of the cryptic.

Death as a subject in her poetry :

It must be observed that the number of poems by Miss. Dickinson on the subject of death is one of the most remarkable things about her. Death and the problem of life after death, obsessed her. She seems to have thought of it constantly. She died all her life; she probed death daily. The theme was inexhaustible for her. It was most of all when she dealt with death that her genius took full possession of her.

Points of contact with Emerson :

Many of her critics call Emily Dickinson a puritan, in the degree that she believed death to be the goal of life; often seeking to learn the manner of a particular friend's dying moments, she certainly was one. Somewhat more appropriately than 'Puritan' she may be called a Transcendentalist by native essence in the words of an early reviewer. Her ties to Emerson are evident and strong.

Awareness, Sensibility, Consciousness :

Miss. Dickinson is 'Puritan' and Transcendentalist, but also the contemporary of a Mark Twain, Sarahorne, Jewelt, W.D. Howells, and Henry James. Though the warp may be spiritual or cosmic, the woof of her poetry is the common, the near, even the low, and particularly the domestic. Her taste for wild exaggeration comes from her early love for the tell-tale humour of the south west.

Her popularity and Fame :

It was this awareness in Dickinson that may chiefly have made her a popular poet in the 1890s and that certainly led to her wider, more lasting reputation in the second American renaissance of the 1920s and to her subsequent fame. She is a confessional poet. She makes a dream of her will to believe. She is subtle and proficient technically.

Short, personal, witty poems :

All Miss. Dickinson's poems are short, broken for the most part into four line stanzas : and all have an unmistakable personal stamp. They are as compressed as telegram. They are like Oracular messages, but witty-Jaunty at times and sometimes trembling on the edge of whimsy.

Pre-occupied with death :

She is pre-occupied with death as the gateway to the next existence which is conceived of as a special glory that has something in common with the conventional paradises offered in the hymns and sermons of her day, or with the Book of Revelation that was among her favourite reading. Death means leisure, grandeur, recognition; it means being with the few, rare people whom it was not possible to know fully upon earth.

Not truly a mystic :

Emily Dickinson's vision of the next world is tempered by her whimsical, domestic cast of mind. Though she speaks again and again of isolation in this world, she is not truly a mystic. God is indeed a puzzling figure in her work; He is the creator who does not know why he has created. He is burglar, banker, father, gentleman, duke, king : a being apparently personified at times as Death, at other times as a sort of lover.

Check Your Progress Question

3. She is preoccupied with _____ as gateway to next existence.

4. _____ and _____ are the final impressions of her work.

Integrity and originality :

The final impression of her work is one of astonishing integrity and originality. Despite her interest in death, she exhibits a quick sensibility to the world around her, and to the materials of her craft. Technically a poor poet, she does most effective violence to vocabulary. Terms from many sources-law, geometry, engineering-are used to suit her purposes.

Few "Whole" poems :

A critic comparing her with Whitman, has said that both, wrote as though no one had written poetry before. She has patches of genius but not often whole poems.

The subject matter and the style :

Many of her poems probably reveal her unspent passion for a lover whose identity has never been clearly established, if indeed there ever was one single figure who was the cause of them. One of her biographers has pointed out that five out of the six most common nouns in her poetry- 'day', 'life', 'eye', 'son', 'men' and 'heaven' - are monosyllables of cosmic meaningfulness when necessary, she would do away with articles, prepositions, conjunctions, relative pronouns, and auxiliary verbs. She commonly used the ballad metre, her fine ear often led her to substitute subtleties of sound for bare rhyme. Emily Dickinson's poetry, with subsequent editing by others, notably by Thomas H. Johnson had not made her poetry available to readers and critics in its proper shape.

An amazing aspect :

The most amazing aspect of Emily Dickinson's personality is the fact that such rebellious, strong-souled, hard minded, iconoclastic, and excellent poetry came, not from a robust man, but very precisely the kind of old maid with whom one would associate the production of scatter-brained verses of prettiness, turgidity and convention.

Influences :

The influences on her poetry were most largely Puritanism, the verse metres of her English hymnal, the Bible, Shakespeare, and Emerson. From the Bible and Shakespeare she took the condensed form - the gnomic, epigrammatic verse that was willing to violate grammar, agreement, mood, voice, tense and expectation, in order to achieve vigour of thought or of image; she carried the device further than Emerson ever cared to.

Regard for objective fact :

The poems of Emily Dickinson are a continual appeal to experience, motivated by an arrogant passion for the truth. "Truth is so rare a thing," she once said, "it is delightful to tell it."

Truth of inner experience :

Her chief truthfulness lay in her insistence on discovering the facts of her inner experience. She was not only fully alive to the phenomena of her own consciousness, but described and distinguished the states and motions of her soul with great accuracy.

Consequence of her self - analysis :

This leads us to a second consequence of Miss. Dickinson's self-analysis. In writing her psychological poems she found that the aspect of the world is in no way constant, that the power of external things depends on our state of mind, that the soul selects its own society and may if granted strength to do so, select a superior order and scope of consciousness. She learned these things by witnessing her own courageous spirit.

The privations of her life :

It is possible to see the greater part of Miss. Dickinson's poetry as an effort to cope with her sense of privation. There were in her life three major privations : She was deprived of an orthodox and steady religious faith; she was deprived of love : and she was deprived of literary recognition. Her second privation, the privation of love is one with which her poems and biographies have made us extremely familiar.

Privation more plentiful than plenty :

One way in which Miss. Dickinson tried to cope with her sense of privation was to assert repeatedly the paradox that privation is more plentiful than plenty that to renounce is to possess the more, that "the banquet of abstemiousness defaces that of - wine", and that "Success is counted sweetest / By those who never succeed".

Her Nature poems :

Though her Nature -poems often deal with the pictorial aspects of flowers and sunsets, her most original ones like "A route of Evanescence" touch upon the strangeness and elusiveness of Nature's "haunted house". Repeatedly she observed the change of seasons and moments of storm and chose Nature's odd creatures to enliven the conventional romantic view of Nature.

Her love poems :

Another major group of poems records an overwhelming passion that progresses to an climactic meeting of the lovers only to collapse into a despairing separation. Her sublimation of passion into a religious triumph originated some of her most moving lyrics, For example, "*Title Divine*" - is 'Mine' and 'Mine' by the right of white election. The poignancy and bitterness of de. 'al are analysed in *Renunciation is a Piercing Virtue*.

Poems of Death and immortality :

Emily Dickinson's most searching exploration within the human spirit deals with death and immortality. She portrays death from every possible aspect; as the courtly lover, the dreadful assassin, the physical corruptor and the one free agent in nature. She interchanged the terms 'death' and 'immortality'. She usually conceived of death as the threshold of that new state.

Her poetic genius :

Certainly the vital light of genius illuminates her poems. With each succeeding generation they have shone brighter, extending their radiant vision of circumference with increasing power and beauty.

Extreme sensitivity : ecstasy in her poetry :

Miss. Dickinson appears in her poetry to have been a very sensitive person. The note of ecstasy is unmistakable in some of her love poems, while the note of despair is apparent in some of her poems as human pain and suffering. A note of

ecstasy is to be found in '*The soul selects her own society*' and of all the souls that stand create both of which are poems of dedication to the lover.

A wide range of pain in her poetry :

Miss. Dickinson was equally sensitive to pain and suffering. Indeed, the pleasure pain antithesis runs through many of her poems. There is a wide range of pain in her poetry. She separates the lesser pain, that will heal, from the greater pain that will not and she chooses the latter category as her special concern. Her obsession with the theme of extreme pain has given rise to the feeling that some personal experience of unusual intensity was at the root of it. On the whole her poems on pain and suffering express her innate courage and strength of spirit.

5.6 I Felt a Funeral in My Brain

Sinking into a state of unconsciousness

Miss Dickinson's best poems on the extremity of pain, the kind producing a state of trance, make its quality of spiritual death concrete in terms of physical death and at the same time dramatise it in the ritual of burial. In this particular poem the levels of sinking down to unconsciousness follow step by step the ceremony of burial so familiar in her village world. The stage lies inside the brain, and the drama is rendered exclusively in terms of unarticulated sounds, transformed into movements which enact the pantomime through its relentless progress to extinction.

The different stages of the experience.

The subdued step of mourners in the real world became in the first stanza a heavy, insistent "treading" to this tortured consciousness, until it feared that "sense was breaking through". The two fold meanings here, of the mind giving way and of the sensations threatening to quicken again from their comfortable state of numbness, are picked up in the following stanza and in the concluding one. When the funeral service began, its incessant droning made the mind at last actually begin to go "numb" though with the disquieting echo of a pagan ritual in its beating "drum". By the time the third stanza is reached, the mind is so dissociated that it is now both the

extinct life in the coffin and the agonised soul across which the pall-bearers "creak". The line "with those same boots of lead, again", implies that the experience was re-enacted over and over yet simultaneously, with the lead of the coffin grotesquely transferred to the boot-sales of the attendants. This same duality of consciousness continues as the procession leaves the church and the funeral knell sounds, announcing the death of the body of agony and at the same time killing the listening spirit. For the poem consists exclusively of a series of images which are all auditory and reiterated - "treading", "beating", "creaking". And with this final tolling, the consciousness is "wrecked, solitary," except for the accompanying "silence" which is more harrowing than any of the sounds had been.

The trance of extinction :

The poem ends with the mind simply giving way, but this too in terms of the last act of burial. Just as the coffin is about to be lowered into the grave, "a plank in reason broke," and the speaker dropped down through level after level of unconsciousness, hitting a new "world" of extinction "at every crash". Perhaps the only flaw in this poem is that the metaphor of "funeral" occupies a position of supreme importance. The powerfully dramatized ceremony, with all its ghostly detail, tends to draw the reader's attention away from the spiritual death which it was intended to highlight.

Allegorical significance :

I felt a funeral in my Brain is a rather disturbing portrayal of death. It contains a detailed account of a complete funeral as felt through the ebbing sensations of a dead person. The poem borders on the morbid in portraying the terrible struggle that the separation of the body from the soul produces. The physical death symbolises spiritual decease and perhaps a momentary insight into the nature of infinity. The opening stanza sets the tone of the poem. The scene begins with the mourners walking past the exposed body before the actual funeral service begins. The atmosphere is oppressive and incessant treading of feet seems physically to torment the brain. In the next stanza the mourners are seated, and the funeral begins. The

formality of the ceremony penetrates the soul like throbbing drums to induce a drugged weariness. In the third stanza, bolts of lead trample across her soul as the coffin is closed and carried to the church. Reeling under these continual blows, the soul experiences complete disintegration with the rumbling of the casket into the grave. The words "finished knowing" complete the loss of conscious control as the soul moves into the irrational unknown into an indifferent universe.

Sense of despair

The emphasis on dying sensations and failing powers suggests death's dreadful isolation. On another level, the initial phrase, "in my brain" hints that this physical death represents some terrible emotional pain or loss that brings an overwhelming sense of despair. In an original interpretation of the poem, one critic holds that it deals with the direct knowledge of the absolute when the soul gains a temporary insight into the infinite. Death symbolizes this, since it is one of the few crucial experiences that reveals a glimpse of final things. This critic concludes that the poem combines both triumph and failure, for man must return to reality after breaking through the barriers of sense into infinity.

5.7 The Soul Selects Her Own Society

Alternative interpretations

However fleeting is love's glory or short-lived in its earthly fulfilment, Miss Dickinson in this poem announces her dedication in terms of unwavering finality. It is possible that this poem (written in 1862) has some relation to her choice of a life of solitude made about this time, preferring her own small circle and closing the door on the general world, as the opening lines suggest. But "the select society" of the first stanza seems specifically limited to the chosen "one" of the third stanza. It is also possible to identify this "one" as the muse rather than a lover. A surface reading of this poem seems to make the affair simply one of the heart. The central stanza supports this view, for "the pausing chariots" and "kneeling emperor" certainly suggest future suitors being rejected because of the chosen "one" rather than the temptations of society that might distract her from her art. On the other hand, this

"one" may be God, as suggested by the fact that her choice is possible only at spiritual maturity ("divine majority"). Finally, there is the hint of a nunnery ("rush mat") where she waits for God alone, the King of Heaven surely taking precedence over mere moral emperors.

Exclusive and whole-hearted devotion

Whether her devotion is to an earthly or a heavenly lover, she is "unmoved" by the petitions of all others, closing the "valves of her attention" to them. The organic "valves" in this climatic image make the exclusion more vital than the variant "lids" in the manuscript, mechanical doors that shut out further vision by voluntary effort. With their anatomical reference, they suggest the instinctive closing off of communication in all directions except the life-giving one. To all others she turns a heart of "stone", the shock word that makes her choice final.

The exclusiveness of friendship

The keynote of this poem is the exclusiveness of friendship, the highly selective quality of affection. Religious and regal associations are combined with images of enclosure to emphasise the soul's individuality. The opening lines portray the soul's careful survey of the "ample nation" for suitable society. In much the same manner as God "elects" or saves chosen saints, the privilege of friendship is conferred on a few, and ultimately only one person receives it. The next two lines are somewhat obscure, but one interpretation is that, after selecting the chosen friend, the soul dramatically denies all others as a symbol of her now matured life ("divine majority").

The image of valves closing like stone emphasises her exclusiveness. The valves not only expand the door image but they also indicate the soul's impervious control (because this image represents a mechanical connection that stops or allows the flow of emotions). The poem ends harshly as the image of the impenetrable, unfeeling stone reflects the soul's attitude towards other claimants for her affections

5.8 Bird came Down the Walk

Nature an alien world

In "*A Route of Evanescence*" Miss Dickinson dramatised the idea of evanescence for birds in general, using the domestic setting of a garden to suggest the possibility of a compromise between the world of Nature and the world of man. In the present poem she touches the spring of difference to separate the two worlds suddenly and irrevocably. What under-cuts the make-believe of friendliness in the first part of this poem is the casually dropped second line, "He did not know I saw". As long as the author is unobserved, the life of Nature goes on with such spontaneous informality as to give her some hope of participating in it. But there are plenty of indications to show that it is an alien world.

The behaviour of the bird

The bird's dinner is a worm eaten "raw", an attribute set off in commas for emphasis, the human being cooks his meat and sticks to vertebrates in general. Stanza two excludes the poetess from the scene more effectively still by introducing an ingenious bit of grammatical magic. "Dew" and "grass" are too small for man to take notice of except in the plural sense; but by the unorthodox addition of an article to make the collective nouns singular she keeps the whole garden world reduced to the bird's size. The poetess is left towering above and outside, having no magic to reduce herself to a size or to a level where communication is possible. So after washing down its meal with 'a dew' the bird continues its walk, recognising its fellow the beetle with a show of courtesy, still unaware of the human intruder. As she bends to join in, the bird's eyes become "frightened beads".

Nature's indifference to man.

"I offered him a crumb" (Line 14). With this first movement on the part of the spectator, the game of friendly relations is over. The fantasy of the last six lines is in striking contrast to the miniature scene and slow action of the first three stanzas. Only by extravagant language could the poetess render the speech and distance of the

bird's removal. The wing motion is that of oars rowing through the seamless ether, to take it "home". How remote that is from the home of the poetess, she illustrates by the even more fanciful figure of butterflies swimming "off banks of noon". All winged things seemed to her to live in another world.

Miss Dickinson, in other words, sees Nature as irrevocably separated from man, and this belief underlies her best work. A comment in one of her letters carries this belief a step further. According to this comment, Nature is indifferent to man's feelings. "Nature must be too young to feel, or many years too old," she wrote. This view is in sharp contrast to the Nature poetry of her heritage. Finding some support in the Puritan separation of Nature, man, and God, her typical attitude looks forward to the modern one namely that Nature is alien to man because the external world is ultimately unknowable by the mind : even its forms vanish before man's eyes.

Contrasting the world of man and that of Nature

In her best Nature-poems Miss Dickinson skilfully deepens her concrete detail and sensuous surface-imagery by contrasting the world of man with that of Nature. This particular poem, for example, can be read literally as an exact description of the quick, secretive movements of a bird as it eats, hops about a garden, and then flies gracefully away. By the final stanza the tone is one of awe and aesthetic response to the bird's beautiful flight. Yet various undercurrents of fear demand that we read deeper into the poem, for the bird's initial casualness changes into hesitancy and suspicion.

Concreteness

The first two stanzas of the poem are the most concrete. At his first appearance, the bird is humorously pictured on a casual afternoon stroll. His eating the worm is a natural act, but the precise description of the bite emphasises the unpleasant aspect of the meal, jolting the customary picture of a bird's harmlessness. The second stanza whimsically continues the meal with the play on the word "grass and the incongruity of drinking "a dew". The sudden appearance of the beetle subtly

shifts the tone as the bird's surface- courtesy conceals the underlying struggle among Nature's creatures.

The mood of fear and anger

In the third and fourth stanzas the mood of fear and anger is produced. The bird's eyes are rapid and hurried, like "frightened beads" rolling wildly in a glass. As the bird stirs his velvet head, the poetess reveals herself to him and offers a crumb. The irony in attempting to appease the bird's fears is evident, since Nature has already supplied sufficient food for the bird. The lack of understanding between man and Nature is also clearly indicated here. In particular the final lines portray a world of aesthetic perfection, where fragile vari-coloured butterflies leap gracefully of sun's hot sands into the liquid coolness of the sky.

The ambivalence of Nature

The poem shows how skilfully Miss Dickinson has moved beyond mere physical description. Basically the poem considers the ambivalence of Nature's beauty and grace having such a destructive core. Yet Nature effortlessly combines these desperate traits as the bird, which ferociously eats the worm, also achieves aesthetic immortality in its flight. Man's spying and his useless offer of a crumb lead to the bird's final rejection and illuminate another theme of Nature's superior self-sufficiency over man's fumbling awkwardness.

Her fresh manner of rendering of theme

Even when the theme is banal, or hackneyed, Miss Dickinson's manner of rendering it makes her poem great. We are familiar with Miss Dickinson's snake, her robins and crocuses and clover, her snowflakes, her frost, her sunsets and autumn days; familiar too are her lamentations, her pleas, her exorcisms, her prayers, her elegies. She displays the same power in poems that neither teach or preach.

A realistic poem

This poem, for instance, has no message, no lesson; it has no biographical or historical significance. But it has to be cherished for its own sake. The bird here is a real bird; he eats and drinks and jerks about as birds do when they are on the ground, he flies off with a different kind of motion, true, but so do real birds fly.

5.9 Because I could not Stop For Death

The poem, a superlative achievement

"Because I could not stop for Death" is a superlative achievement in which Death becomes one of the great characters of literature. The poetess visualises Death as a person whom she knew and trusted, or believed that she could trust. He might be any gentleman belonging to her own town of Amherst, who at one time or another had acted as her escort. Because she could not stop for Death, he kindly stopped for her. "The carriage held but just ourselves - And immortality". Since she understands it to be a last ride, she of course expects it to be unhurried. Indeed, his graciousness in taking time to stop for her, at that point and on that day in her life when she was too busy to stop for him is a mark of special politeness. She is therefore quite willing to put aside her work.

The journey to the grave

She notes the daily routine of the life she is leaving behind. Children playing games during a school recess catch her eye at the last. And now the sense of motion is quickened or perhaps, more exactly, the sense of time comes to an end as they pass the cycles of the day and the seasons of the year, at a period of both ripeness and decline. How insistently the word "passed" echoes through stanza 3! she now conveys her feeling of being outside time and change, for she corrects herself to say that the sun passed them, as it of course does all who are in the grave : "We passed the setting sun - /Or rather he passed us". She is aware of dampness and cold, and becomes suddenly conscious of the sheerness of the dress and scarf which she now discovers that she wears : For only Gossamer, my gown / My tippet - only Tulle".

Check Your Progress Question

5. The Bird Selects Her own Society is a _____ poem.

Cessation of all activity

The two concluding stanzas, with progressively decreasing concreteness, hasten the final identification of her "house". It is the slightly rounded "of the ground", with a scarcely visible roof and a cornice "in the ground". To time the seasonal change, which has already ceased, is now added motion. Cessation of all activity and creativeness is absolute. Gradually, too, we realise that Death as a person has receded into the background, mentioned last only impersonally in the opening words of the fifth stanza ("we paused"), where his services as escort and companion are over. In this poem concrete realism melts into "awe and circumference" with matchless economy.

The merits and defects of the poem

There are a few curious and remarkable poems representing a mixed theme, of which perhaps the finest example is : "Because I could not stop for Death". In the fourth line of this poem, we find the familiar device of using a major abstraction in a somewhat loose and indefinable manner; in the last stanza there is the semi-playful pretence of familiarity. With the post humours experience of eternity, so that the poem ends unconvincingly though gracefully. For the rest, the poem is a remarkably beautiful one on the subject of the daily realisation of the imminence of death. It is a poem of departure from life, an intensely conscious leave-taking. In so far as it concentrates on the life that is being left behind, it is wholly successful: in so far as it attempts to experience the death to come, it is fraudulent, however exquisitely, and in this it falls below her finest achievement. Some critics have praised the poem in the highest terms-almost for its very defects, she has presented a typical Christian theme in all its final irresolution, without making any final statement about it. It is possible to solve any problem of insoluble experience by retreating a step and defining the boundary at which comprehension ceases, and by then marking the necessary moral adjustment to that boundary; this in itself is an experience both final and serious, and it is the experience on which Miss Dickinson's finest work is based.

Surface meaning and deeper meaning

A number of poems by Miss Dickinson have the funeral ceremony as their theme. This particular poem is her finest in that category. On the surface this poem seems like just another version of a procession to the grave, but here it is also a metaphor that can be probed for deeper levels of meaning, spiritual journeys of a very different sort.

Death, as a leisurely, kindly gentleman

At first reading, it would appear that the poetess has invoked the orthodox reassurance against the fear of death, though a suitor has replaced the traditional angel. The suitor's mission in taking the poetess out of the woes of this world into the bliss of the next is here regarded as compassionate: Death usually rude, sudden, and impersonal, has been presented here as a kindly and leisurely gentleman. Although the poetess was aware that this is the last ride since his carriage can only be a hearse, its terror is subdued by the "civility" of the driver who is merely serving the end of "Immortality". The loneliness of the journey, with Death on the driver's seat and her body laid out in the coach behind, is dispelled by the presence of her immortal part that rides the carriage as a co-passenger this slight personification being justified by the separable concept of the soul.

The hope for immortality

This poem illustrates how Miss Dickinson's line of thinking at times rises to a level where abstract ideas are personified and dramatised, filled with vital breath, and placed in exciting relation with each other. By telling vividly of the start of a journey by carriage to eternity, with Death as the coachman, the poem fancifully gives concrete expression to the hope for immortality. In the opening line, "I could not stop", ambiguously suggests a labourer who could not put off toil. The second stanza shows that the poet has "put away" not only toil but also leisure. Now the slow carriage passes children at play, oblivious of the nearby travellers, next it passes fields which emphasise the lifelessness of the poet and the driver by "gazing" at them.

Such is the preparation for the final stanza in which immortality has replaced the mortality of earth.

Eternity, the destination

The house of death so lightly sketched in the last but one stanza is not the poetess's destination. The destination is clearly stated at the end as "Eternity", though it is significant that she never reaches it:

Since then - 'tis centuries - and yet
Feels shorter than the day
I first surmised the horses' heads
were toward Eternity.

The fraudulent element in the poem

An eminent critic, who praises this poem as remarkably beautiful, complains that it breaks down at this point because it goes beyond what he calls the "limits of judgement": in so far as it attempts to experience death and express the nature of posthumous beatitude, he says, it is "fraudulent". The poem does not in the least strive after the incomprehensible. It deals with the daily realisation of the imminence of death, offset by man's yearning for immortality. The idea of achieving immortality by a ride in the carriage of death is confronted by the concrete fact of physical disintegration as she pauses before a "swelling in the ground".

The merits of the poem

In projecting the last sensations of consciousness as the world fades out, she has employed progressively fewer visible objects until with fine dramatic skill she limits herself at the end to a single one, the "horse heads", recalled in a flash of memory as that on which her eyes had been fixed throughout the journey. These bring to mind "the carriage" of the opening stanza, and Death who was receded as a person, is now by implication back in the driver's seat. All of this poetically elapsed time seems to her "shorter than the day", the day of death brought to an end by the setting sun of the third stanza, when she first guessed the direction in which these

apocalyptic horses were headed. The last word "Eternity" is strictly limited by the directional preposition "toward". So the poem returns to the very day, even the same instant, when it started. Its theme is a Christian one, yet unsupported by any of the customary rituals and without any final statement of Christian faith.

Other levels of meaning

Critics have found other levels of meaning too in this poem. One critic has described the driver as "amorous but gentle"; another has noted "the subtly interfused erotic motive", love having frequently been an idea linked with death for the romantic poets. In the period of her normal social life, when Emily Dickinson took part in those occasions that give youthful love its chance, she frequently went on drives with young gentlemen. The figure of a prospective suitor would inevitably have come to the minds of a contemporary audience as they read :

He kindly stopped for me-

The carriage held but just ourselves-

Such a young couple likewise would have driven beyond the village limits, into the open country and then, romantically, past the "setting sun".

The hint of a heavenly marriage

The love-death symbolism however, re-emerges with new implications when we keep in mind the fourth stanza which used to be omitted by past editors who were baffled by its meaning:

For only gossamer, my gown -

My tippet - only tulle-

"Gossamer" in her day was not yet applied to fine-spun cloth but only to that filmy substance like cobwebs sometimes seen floating in the autumn air and probably formed by a kind of spider. And by transforming the bridal veil into a "tippet" (the flowing scarf - like part of the distinctive hood of holy orders), she is properly dressed

for a heavenly marriage. Death, to be sure, is not the true bridegroom but a substitute or an agent; he is the envoy taking her on this curiously premature wedding journey to the heavenly altar where she will be married to God. The whole idea of the Bride-of-the-Lamb is admittedly only latent in the text of this poem, but in view of the body of her writings, it seems legitimate to suggest it as another metaphor for the extension of meanings. The idea of Christ as the heavenly bridegroom with the church or the Elect as his bride, was available to her from the Book of Revelation and from the glosses to the Song of Solomon, though she shrewdly avoided imitating the Biblical phrasing.

A typical Christian theme without any final statements

According to one critic, this is one of the perfect poems in English, and it illustrates better than anything else the special quality of Miss Dickinson's mind. Indeed, this critic calls it one of the greatest poems in the English language. The rhythm charges with movement the pattern of suspended action in the poem. Every image is precise and, moreover, not merely beautiful, but fused with the central idea. Every image extends and intensifies every other. The sharp "gazing" before "grain" instills into Nature a cold vitality of which the qualitative richness has infinite depth. The content of death in the poem eludes explicit definition. Worth noting also is the subtly inter-fused erotic motive, which the idea of death has presented to most romantic poets, love being a symbol interchangeable with death. There is no solution to the problems; there can be only a presentation of it in the full context of intellect and feeling.'

An acceptance of death

"Because I could not stop for Death" is one of the best of those poems in which Miss Dickinson triumphs over death by accepting it, calmly, civilly as befits a gentleman receiving the attention of a gentleman. It is an essay in death-in-life. The tone is tenderly ironic, the atmosphere tinged with sorrow for life and concern for the smallness of the human soul that must face relentless death, solitary except for its immortality. The poem is simple, almost commonplace, yet the mystery that pervades

it is inexhaustible. There is, within this mystery, a sense of reconciliation. To find anything like it we have to go to Prospero's closing speeches in "The Tempest".

The reaction of an old man

An aged man who can see his death approaching fast will respond to the poem with a greater appreciation of its sentiments than one for whom death is yet a dim, far-off reality. The aged man will readily get into the atmosphere of the poem. The poem will arouse in him mingled feelings of heartache and acceptance, pangs of regret and reconciliation with the ultimate end, hope, and despair, revolt and acquiescence.

5.10 Summation

Writing apart from the main stream of nineteenth century American poetry, she created a language of her own, transforming the domestic into poetic. She makes constant use of the first person singular. Her genuine enthusiasm for the beauty of Nature is mingled with an awareness of its innate mystery and strangeness. Throughout her poetic career, the one underlying theme of all her verse is death. It is death that attracted her in a most profound and cruel way. She makes use of imperfect rhyme, taking liberty with grammar and rhyme and makes a habit of packing her lines with cryptic meanings. She took great pains to select the words that suited her purpose most. She defies labels – Romantic, Transcendental, metaphysical, meditative; she defies boundaries; she defies categories – religious or existential, or lyric or Nature poet. There is no doubt about her uniqueness.

5.11 Annotations

5.11.1 A bird came down the walk : Model Annotation

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad-
They looked like frightened Beeds. I thought -
He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious
 I offered him a Crumb,
 And he unrolled his feathers
 And rowed him softer home –
 Than Oars divide the Ocean,
 Too Silver for a Seam-
 Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon.
 Leep Plashers, as they Swim.

Emily Dickinson, in her poem 'A Bird Came Down, The walk"', talks of a bird eating a worm, drinking a dew, saluting a beetle and gaily walking along, the poetess wants to help the bird.

The last six lines of the poem beautifully describe the bird's flight. The bird unfolds its wings. The wings are like Oars, unfolds its wings. The wings are like Oars, and the bird's body is like a boat pushed forward by the oar-like wings. The air is like an ocean. The only difference is that the air is seamless and cannot be divided by the wings, as the water of the ocean is divided at least for a few seconds by the oars. The flight of the bird is also as soft and noiseless as the of butterflies off sunny banks. Like the bird the butterflies also leap into the vast, Ocean like air and 'Swim', that is, they fly.

Thus, the unbridgeable gap between man and Nature is emphasised in this poem. The bird's eating a worm and shrinking from a beetle imply that even in the world of nature there is constant civil war and mutual destruction.

5.11.2 Annotation Passages

1. And then he drank a dew

From a Convenient grass

And then hopped sidewise to the wall

To let a beetle pass.

2. A Bird came down the walk -

He did not know I saw-

He bit on Angle- worm in halves

And ate the fellow, raw.

5.11.3 Because I could not stop for death: Model Annotation

1. We passed the school, where children strove

At Recess - in the Ring -

We passed the fields of Gazing Grain -

We passed the setting Sun -

Or rather- He passed Us -

In the poem 'Because I could not stop for Death', Emily Dickinson fancies her own death and being carried to the graveyard. The hearse passes by certain scenes which are representative of the different stages of life. The children playing at recess are so much absorbed in their games that they do not even look up at the passing hears. This might symbolize mankind being immersed so much in childish activities as not to pay attention to the phenomenon of death. The glassy stare in the eyes of the dead person is transferred to the grain and the grain is said to gaze at the passing hears. Next, it is said that the hearse passed the setting sun. However, the poetess corrects herself and says that the setting sun passed the hearse. The correction made by the poetess is significant because the sun goes its way, leaving behind dead people without really caring for them.

5.11.4 Annotation Passages

1. The Dews drew quivering and chill-

For only Gossamer, My Gown-

My Tippet - only Tulle

2. We paused before a House that seemed

A swelling of the Ground.

The Roof was Scarcely visible

The Cornice - in the Ground.

5.11.5 The Soul Selects her Own Society : Model Annotation

Unmoved - see notes the chariots - pausing –

At her low Gate

Unmoved - an emperor be kneeling

Upon her mat -

Emily Dickinson says that the soul selects a small band of companions and rejects all the others who seek after her, however great they might be. The soul does not attach any importance to those who are materially advanced such as emperors who come in a chariot and kneel on a mat to curry the poetess's favours.

5.11.6 Annotation Passages

I've known her - from an ample nation

choose one.....

Then, close the valves of her attention

Like stone.

Notes and Reference :

The thing with feathers - bird. Hope is personified as a bird here.

Perches - remains

The true without words - a wordless tune - The universality of hope, cutting across all languages, is stressed here.

gale - a strong wind; here, a symbol of suffering and misfortune.

Sore - Severe.

abash - to embarrass : to confound

the little bird	- hope
heard it	- experienced hope
in extremity	- in extreme danger.
a Crumb	- even a small reward.

5.11 Answers to CYP Questions

1. A dead fly
2. fairylike
3. death
- 4.integrity, originality
5. realistic

5.12 Questions

1. Emily Dickinson's attitude to Death as revealed in her poems.
2. Account for the popularity of Emily Dickinson.

5.13 For Further Reading

1. American Literature - Andrew Hook
2. American Poetry: An Introductory Anthology - Donald Hall
3. Literary History of the United States - Robert Spiller
4. Emily Dickinson - Richard B.Sewall

MENDING WALL

-Robert Frost

5.1 Introduction

Robert Frost has been called the finest American poet of the 20th century. The greatness of Frost as a pastoral poet has been universally recognized. The bulk of his poetry deals with rural life. He is a great lover of nature, and his love, too, like that of Wordsworth is local and regional. He is a poet of man. His central subject is humanity. *Mending Wall* is one of his popular poems. It was included in the volume *North of Boston* published in 1914. The poem shows the conflict between two antithetical attitudes to life. As usual, Frost refuses to resolve or oversimplify the conflict.

5.2 Unit Objectives

- Robert Frost as the purest classical poet of America
- Frost's message to the society
- Frost as a great artist with words

5.3 Unit Structure

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Unit objectives
- 5.3 Unit structure
- 5.4 Paraphrase of 'Mending Wall'
- 5.5 Notes and References
- 5.6 Critical Appreciation
- 5.7 Ambivalence in 'Mending Wall'
- 5.8 Symbols in 'Mending Wall'
- 5.9 Summation

5.10 Model Annotation

5.11 Annotation Passages

5.12 Answers to CYP Questions

5.13 Questions

5.14 For Further Reading

5.4 Paraphrase of 'Mending Wall'

There is something in nature that is opposed to Walls and divisions. This mysterious force disrupts Walls and makes the stones in walls fall down. When stones fall down, gaps are created in Walls. Hunters further contribute to the breakdown of Walls. The speaker comes every now and then and repairs the Walls. Still, the gaps are there. For, the hunters undo what the speaker does. They tumble down Walls so that rabbits cannot hide there. Rabbits left in the open can be easily caught by the hunting dogs. The speaker's neighbouring farm is owned by a farmer who lives beyond the hill. The speaker meets his neighbour in spring during mending time. They join together and build up the wall between their farms once again.

Each gathers the stones that have fallen on his side and puts them back in their original places. Some of these stones are rough, irregular loaves and the others are smooth and round like balls. The speaker is aware that the stones will not remain fixed there for long. So, he despairingly says that only some magical power can keep the stones fixed in their places. He appeals to the stones to remain fixed there for long. So he despairingly says that only some magical power can keep the stones in their places. He appeals to the stones to remain fixed at least till the two farmers go away from that place.

The two farmers work hard and roughen their fingers. But the speaker is not genuinely interested in the work. He considers it only as an outdoor game, with just one player on each side. The work, according to the speaker, does not deserve any more attention than what we pay to a game. The speaker firmly believes that the dividing Wall is not at all necessary. The speaker grows apple in his orchard but the neighbour grows pine in his. This difference is quite enough to distinguish between

the two farms. But the neighbour does not agree. He says repeatedly that good fences make for a cordial relationship between neighbours. But the speaker, probably moved to do mischief by the spring season, counters the arguments by saying that fences are necessary only if there are cows. Here are no cows and so no fence is necessary.

The speaker also says that, before raising the Wall he would like to know what he was walling in and what he was walling out. That is, he would like to know what he stood to gain and what he stood to lose by raising the wall. The speaker once again says that there is some mysterious force which is antithetical to walling. There is some mysterious spirit that wants to pull down all walls. The speaker almost wants to say that the spirit which is against walling is the mischievous spirit of elves. At the same time, the speaker is aware that it is something more than the spirit of the elves.

He wants the neighbour to find out what that mysterious force is. The speaker finds the neighbour carrying stones in each hand, like a savage carrying stone weapons. For the speaker, the neighbour seems to be moving in the darkness of ignorance. The neighbour is not at all influenced by the speaker's liberal philosophy. He keeps repeating his forefather's practical advice that good fences make good neighbours.

5.5 Notes and References

Something ' - Some mysterious force in nature. Note the vagueness of the speaker's thinking.

The frozen ground swell - The frozen ground swells. As result, walls fall down.

And spills the sun - The sun heats the stones. As a result, they expand and fumble down.

boulders - huge pieces of stone.

Pass abreast - walk side by side.

the line - the boundary separating the two farms.

loaves....bails - Some bails are flat and some others are round. Because of their uneven size, they cannot be fither easily.

all pine - only pine trees grow in his farm.

the cones - the conical pine fruits.

Spring is the mischief in me – the spring season has made him talk mischievously of the desirability of pulling down the wall.

Isn't it where there are cows- fences are necessary to keep out cows and other straying animals, Now there are no cows, so, no fence is necessary

Like to give - likely to give

elves - mischievous fairies

darkness - the darkness is here mataphorical. It is the darkness of ignorance

go behind - go against, give up.

5.6 Critical Appreciation of “Mending Wall”

‘Mending Wall’ is one of Frost’s popular poems. It was included in ‘North of Boston’ published in 1914. It is a dramatic monologue. It gives us ample insights into the character of the speaker. At the same time, the character of the other farmer is also sufficiently revealed.

Frost’s poems have an ambivalent ring. ‘Mending wall’ is also ambivalent. The poem presents two different attitudes to life and the conflict between the two attitudes is left unresolved. The young speaker advances several arguments in support of the view that they had better pull down the dividing wall. He says that there is no need to have a wall between the two farms, as the farms are distinguished by the trees growing there. The speaker’s farm has apple trees and the neighbour’s as pine trees. Another argument of the young speaker is that the wall is an unwanted relic of bygone times and serves no purpose. There are no cows at present. So, no fence is

Check Your Progress Question

1. ‘Mending Wall’ is a ____.
2. Who supports to pull down the dividing wall?

necessary to protect the farms against straying cattle. The young speaker also implies that nature is conducive to unity and unification.

“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That sends the frozen ground swell under it
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast”

The young speaker also implies that there is gain in retaining the wall of division, as the two farms are demarcated thereby in such a way as to give no room to any unseenly equivocation and dispute. At the same time, the wall will deal a blow to mutual understanding and will always keep the two farmers apart:

“Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence”

Though the young speaker’s views are started prominently they by no means eclipse the argument of the neighbouring farmer. The young speaker’s idealism is opposed by the neighbour’s earthy wisdom and traditionalism. He keeps reiterating his father’s sage counsel that “good fences make good neighbours”. The old farmer firmly believes that a relationship will last only if due care is taken to guard against circumstances that are likely to lead to fiction. The dividing wall, by demarcating the two farms and avoiding greedy encroachment, will create a smooth relationship between the two farmers. The young farmer’s idealism is likely to create more problems than it solves, and so he is associating with mischievous “elves”. Also his thinking is vague, which is indicated by his frequent use of the word “Something”.

“Something there is that doesn’t love a wall”.

Such vague thinking and lack of a concrete course of action will, the old farmer thinks, be destructive of peace. Thus Frost presents two equally strong and valid arguments which are opposed to each other. It redounds to Frost’s greatness that

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

3. In the view of
young speaker,
_____ is
conducive to
unity and
unification.

he does not oversimplify the complexity of the other. The ambivalence of the poem thus serves to underline the complexity and the insolubility of the problem on hand.

Another notable aspect of the poem is the use of apt symbols. The wall over which the two farmers wrangle is the central symbol in the poem. The wall represents the economic, political, racial, religious and other barriers that separate man from man. The young farmer who wants the wall to be pulled down stands for the spirit of revolution that wants to create a society without any barriers. The neighbouring farmer who wants the wall to be retained stands for the spirit of traditionalism that wants to preserve conventions and age-old institutions. As Lynen says "In the voices of the two men the younger, whimsical, 'new-fashioned' speaker and the old-fashioned farmer who replies with his one determined sentences, his inherited maxim - some readers hear the clash of two forces; the spirit of revolt, which challenges tradition, and the spirit of restraint, which insists that conventions must be uphold, built up and continually rebuilt, as a matter of principle".

Thus 'Mending Wall' has the characteristic qualities of Frost's poetry, namely ambivalence and use of apt symbols.

5.7 Ambivalence in 'Mending Wall'

Frost's poems are noted for their ambivalence. Frost does not espouse any particular side. He presents both sides of a problem and leaves it at that. As a result, the complexity of the problem is conveyed to the reader.

Mending Wall is also an ambivalent poem. In this poem, the poet presents two men who represent antithetical attitudes to life. The speaker is a new-fangled liberal. He is of the opinion that all distinctions must go. He holds that most barrier do not serve any purpose. For example, the wall between the speaker's farm and the neighbour's is not at all necessary. Even without a fence, the two farms can be easily distinguished. In one farm apple is grown, and in the other farm pine is grown. The speaker humorously points out that the apples in one farm will not eat the pines in the other farm. In other words, even when there is no possibility for any encroachment, the fence is maintained. There are no cows in the vicinity to stray into each other's

farm - that is, there is no threat from any outside force. Still, the fence is kept. The speaker maintains that we blindly follow outworn traditions and keep up barriers. The neighbour repeatedly echoes his forefather's statement that good fences make good neighbours. He does not realize that these good old axioms are no longer relevant to the current situation. Thus Frost implies that most barriers exist, because we blindly follow useless traditions.

The speaker considers all barriers as being man-made. He would like to revive the good old times, when people loved together without any barriers erected among them. He holds that there is some force mysteriously working towards the eradication of all barriers :

“Something there is that doesn't love a Wall,
That sends the frozen ground swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun”

Again,

“Something there is that doesn't love a Wall,
That wants it down”.

If the neighbour represents the wisdom of his father, the Speaker harks back to a far earlier time, to the primitive times, in fact, when people lived close to nature and did not imprison one another with artificial barriers.

The neighbour has deviated from this earthy wisdom. He is a product of man-made institutions. In the eyes of the 'natural' speaker striving for natural brotherhood and unity, the neighbour, a product of man-made divisions, appears a savage, groping in the dark. In other words, the speaker is represented as enlightened and the neighbour as unenlightened:

“I see him there
Bringing stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

4. The neighbor
represents the
wisdom of his

Not off woods only and the shade of trees”.

Frost is not one-sided. He does not present arguments against barriers alone. He presents arguments in favour of barrier also. The foremost argument in favour of barriers is that “good fences make good neighbours”. A trouble-free relationship can be established, only if the terms and conditions of the relationship are spelt out in a clear cut manner. There will be no friction between neighbours, if their farms are unequivocally demarcated. Barriers, by curbing greed and selfishness, make for peace and order.

The second point, implied by Frost is that our forefathers, full of ripe wisdom, understood the need for barriers. It would be suicidal to lightly dismiss an institution born of their sage wisdom. The neighbour's acquiescence in his father's way of life shows his respect for the wisdom accumulated through the ages.

Another point in favour of barriers is that the speaker who wants barriers to be broken down is extremely vague. He does not advance any concrete programme as to how a happy relationship can be established between neighbours without erecting any barrier between them. The vagueness of the speaker's thinking is indicated in the opening line itself.

“Something there is that doesn't love a wall”.

Again,

“Something there is that doesn't love a wall”

The repeated use of the word ‘Something’ shows the confusion and lack of positive thinking of the speaker. The following passage is also vague:

“Before I built a wall I'd ask I know
What I was walling in or walling out”

The speaker wants to weigh the advantages and disadvantages in keeping the wall. But he does not say exactly what is gained and what is lost. The point implied

by- Frost is that such vague thinking and lack of a definite plan will do harm. That is why Frost points out that there is "mischief" in the speaker's thinking:

"Spring is the mischief in me"

A few lines later, the speaker is once again associated with "elves" which are spirits bent on doing mischief.

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall

....I would say Elves."

If the neighbour is associated with savages, the speaker is also deflated by being associated with mischievous elves.

Thus Frost presents both sides of the picture and refuses to take up sides. Hence his picture is highly ambivalent.

5.8 Symbols in 'Mending Wall'

Frost uses plenty of symbols in his poems. As he himself tells us his article "The figure a poem makes," "he is by intention a symbolist who takes his symbols from the public domain". By using symbols, Frost enriches the texture of his verse and reveals the full significance and deeper meaning of particular situations and events.

On the surface, 'Mending Wall' is a simple poem. It is about a wrangle between two farmers over the wall dividing their farms. But, on deeper analysis, the poem is said to contain deep layers of meaning. Even ordinary details are fraught with symbolic significance. An old New England farmer wants to re-build the wall demarcating his farm from the neighbouring farm. But the other farmer is given to progressive views. He wants the divisive wall to be pulled down. He marshals a number of arguments and points out that the wall is not necessary.

The wall is used symbolically in the poem. It symbolises national, racial, religious, political and economic barriers which divide man from man. The wall represents all kinds of man-made barriers.

The two farmers represent two antithetical attitudes towards life. The young speaker who wants the wall to be pulled down represents the spirit of revolt which challenges tradition. The old farmer who keeps repeating his father's age old counsel that "good fences make good neighbours" stands for the spirit of restraint, which insists that conventions must be uphold, built up and continually rebuilt, as a matter of principle.

The young speaker keeps saying that there is something in nature which is against walls,- something that slowly and steadily undermines walls :

"Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen ground swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast."

Thus it is hinted that nature makes for unity and unification and that only man-made values lead to division and distinction.

Thus the deeper significance of the poem can be grasped only if we interpret the poem along symbolic lines.

5.9 Summation

Robert Frost's treatment of nature is unique and distinctive in many ways. Every poem of Frost conveys a message to the society. He is a wise poet-philosopher who advocates not a rejection of life but an acceptance of it with all its limitations. He does not regard the universe as chaotic though he is conscious of its many imperfections. In this poem, he expresses his philosophy of tolerance, generosity, and brotherhood in the contrast between his neighbour's dogmatic 'Good fences make good neighbours' The fence here has a symbolic significance. It also symbolizes national, racial, religious, political and economic conflicts and prejudices which

divide man from man come in the way of mutual understanding and harmonious relationship. at another level of understanding, the dispute between the two neighbours symbolizes the clash between tradition and modernity, between age and youth.

5.10 Model Annotation

Something there is that doesn't love a wall
That sends the frozen ground swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

These are the opening lines of Frost's poem Mending Wall, 'Mending Wall' is about the wrangle between two farmers over the wall that divides their farms. The young farmer wants the wall to be pulled down, where as the neighbouring farmer wants the wall to be rebuilt. In this connection, the young farmer talks of a mysterious force in nature which keeps pulling down walls. He says that the ground swells, with the result that the wall disintegrates. The stones in the upper part of the wall fall down and gaps are made in the wall. The young farmer thus suggests that nature pulls down walls and tries to create amity, whereas man man-made values create division and discriminations.

Frost is here attributing a mysterious power to nature. As Elizabeth Jennings points out, "Frost often writes of inanimate objects, as if they were alive and capable of human actions, thoughts and emotions."

The use of the word "something" in the very opening line of the poem points out the weakness of the young farmer. The word 'Something' shows that the speaker's thinking is very vague. It is implied that such vague thinking takes us nowhere.

It may be mentioned in this context that the wall symbolises all kinds of economic, political, religious, racial and other barriers that separate Man and Man.

5.11 Passages for Annotation

1. He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across.
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
2. I could say 'Eives' to him.
But it's not elves exactly and I'd rather.
He said it for himself.

5.12 Answers to CYP Questions

1. dramatic monologue
2. Young Speaker
3. nature
4. father

5.13 Questions

1. Comment on the poem 'Mending Wall' by Robert Frost.
2. Write a critical appreciation of the poem 'Mending Wall'

5.14 For Further Reading

Robert Frost's Poetic Style

- Sharma

Robert Frost

- Richard Poirier

Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays - James M.Cox

Unit 6 A

Space for Hints

Waking in the Blue

-Robert Lowell

6.1 Introduction

Robert Lowell (1917-1977) was an American poet, considered to be one of the founders of the confessional poetry movement. *Life Studies* is the process out of which his life is recalled and his self is reconstructed. This is much like a process of free association which brings content from the unconscious into consciousness. "Waking in the Blue" was published in his book *Life Studies*. Lowell explored his struggles with mental illness in this poem; he describes his hospitalization in a mental asylum.

6.2 Unit Objectives

- Lowell's exploration of his lost self
- Lowell as a confessional poet

6.3 Unit Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Unit Objectives
- 6.3 Unit Structure
- 6.4 Life and Works
- 6.5 Summary
- 6.6 Notes
- 6.7 Analysis
- 6.8 Summation
- 6.9 Answers to CYP Questions
- 6.10 Questions

6.11 For Further Reading

6.4 Life and Works

Robert Lowell was born in Boston in 1917. He studied at Harvard and Kenyon college. After marriage, he was converted to Roman Catholicism. He was imprisoned in 1943 for deliberate refusal to fight in the Second World War. In 1944, he published his first book of poems. His publication *Life Studies* (1959) brought him international recognition. It was during the 1950s that Lowell first suffered from manic attacks which lasted throughout the rest of his life. He died in 1977.

6.5 Summary

The poem describes a few inmates of an asylum for the mentally ill. The first person to be described is the night attendant. He is a student of Boston University. It is not known whether he is also mentally ill or is working part-time as an attendant in the home. The attendant has spent the night thinking of strange matters. He has not slept soundly. So, he feels drowsy when he wakes up in the morning. It is said ironically that the attendant, an erstwhile student of Boston University, he used I.A. Richards's masterpiece *THE MEANING OF MEANING* only as a pillow to prop up his drowsy head. The intellectual content of the book has been sadly missed by him. The passage is a dig at the hollow graduates produced by universities. He is seen 'cat walking' down the corridor of the asylum.

*Absence! My hearts grows tense
as though a harpoon were sparring for the kill.
(This is the house for the "mentally ill.")*

The author of the poem presents himself as an inmate of the asylum. Though the morning is marked by a serene blue sky; the author is all at ease. He is struck by the emptiness of the golf ground where there are only a few crows cawing. The author's unease increases. He feels pained like a whale pierced with a harpoon as he notices some of the deranged inmates of the asylum.

Check Your Progress Question

1. The night attendant missed the intellectual content of I.A. Richards' ____ book.

America is known for its sports culture. The author exposes the hollowness of that culture by representing a famous foot-ball player by name Stanely. Sportsmen think only of how to keep physically fit. They are shown utterly lacking in significant human concerns. Stanely, though aged sixty, has succeeded in keeping his vigour intact. He has retained the sturdiness of a twenty-year-old the young man. He is strong and straight like a ramrod and muscular like a seal. He has a kingly profile which is, however, rigid like granite. The real image and the granite image bring out the player's lack of humanity. Stanley's obsession with the game is emphasized. He is wearing a golf cap 'all day, all night' - He is concerned only about how to remain slim through a diet of sherbet and ginger ale. Always thinking of foot-ball he urinates while bathing in his long tub. He has no thoughts and feelings to communicate. He is as dumb as seal. The inference is that the masses who adore Stanley have also one-track minds like him and are devoid of intellectual concerns.

The next inmate to be satirized is a typical college student by name Bobbie. He is brash and debonair. He is concerned only about maintaining his handsome look. He perfumes himself heavily and is always on the move. The author compares him to an irresponsible and destructive sperm whale. The only thing that he does, are bragging about himself, displaying his eye-catching suit and lolling on chairs. College students are shown to be utterly lacking in social concerns. If players are like seals, college students are like sperm whales and horses.

Next, the poet pillories Roman Catholics through a picture of the Roman Catholic attendants in the asylum. What are prominent about them are their crew haircuts and twinkling eyes. But they do not evince and spiritual interest. Their talk is 'nonsensical'. They are proud of having suppressed their sexual instinct. They esteem their sexual purity so highly that they are contemptuous towards all others who led normal sexual lives. They dismiss even the first settlers on the American soil as screwballs. The serious limitation of the Catholics is that they look down upon sex.

The Author disparages himself in the last stanza, he does not indulge in the Shelleyan boast that poets are the legislators of the world. His hearts melts at the sight of the emaciated inmates of the asylum. But he feels helpless. He has no means of

**Check Your
Progress
Question**

2. America is known for its _____ culture.

3. Name the typical college student satirized in this poem?

righting the wrongs in society. So he spends his time eating sumptuous New England dishes. It is with a sense of Achievement that he talks of his weight of two hundred pounds.

6.6 Notes

ramrod - an iron rod used to charge a gun

vaguely - plumbing - The erst while star player, now in his sixties,

has no control even over passing urine.

Victorian plumbing - an old, dilapidated bath-tub

sherbet - water - ice.

Ginger beer - a non - alcoholic, aerated drink.

6.7 Analysis

Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* (1959) made a significant breakthrough to a new style in American poetry. It stressed a more personal and autobiographical content. In "Waking in the Blue", Lowell shows the process of memory by which the speaker comes to realize that he is one of the inmates of the age. The poem is based on his experience of mental breakdown and subsequent life in a mental hospital. The speaker describes his inner states of mind through the outer scenes. "Azure day" seems to reflect his anxiety, making his "agonized blue window bleaker". The landscape itself becomes petrified: "Crows maunder on the petrified fairway." Inmates are presented just as the "figures of ossified young." They have the fixed obsession for their lost post. Stanley, "once a Harvard all-American full back," still carries the build of a boy in his twenties. He lives only in his glorious past as

"kingly granite profile in a crimson golf-cap,
worn all day, all night."

Another inmate is Bobbie who was once a member of an elite Harvard club:

Check Your Progress Question

4. The poem is based on his experience in a _____ hospital.

"Porecellian '29,
a replica of Louis XVI
without the wig --."

As Stanley looks like a seal, so Bobbie too recalls a sea animal: "redolent and roly-poly as a sperm whale." Again like Stanley, he turns his attention to his past:

"he swashbuckles about in his birthday suit
and horses at chairs."

Physically, these two figures still keep their strength, but mentally they are fixed in their twenties. Their madness is partly the result of an intense early narcissism, tied to achievements...whose value does not carry very far beyond the confines of Harvard Yard, or of adolescence. These two Harvard men fail to make contact with present reality as they linger on in their past. Time has not moved onward since their school days.

In the course of meditation, he finally comes to identify himself with others.

We are all old-timers,

Each of us holds a locked razor.

The speaker looks at himself imprisoned with others in the Boston culture. His hearty New England breakfast and proud walk in his turtle-necked French sailor's jersey are associated with the Boston culture he has examined in *Life Studies*. He comes to know that he is also one of the mental cases. He finds his future as shaky because he is defined in terms of his past. He observes himself mirrored in his inmates.

6.8 Summation

The poem 'Waking in the Blue' describes the whole American society as a mental hospital. The characters mentioned in the poem represent different social strata. For Lowell, remembering is the process of recognizing his own self and others in the culture. Lowell explores himself within American culture by recollecting his painful

memories. His autobiographical act provides him with the opportunity to comment on and to refigure his life and American culture.

6.9 Answers to CYP Questions

1. *Meaning of Meaning* 2. sports 3. Bobbie 4. mental

6.10 Question

1. How does Robert Lowell present the American society in "Walking in the Blue"?

6.11 For Further Reading

Robert Lowell: Essays on the Poetry : Ed. by Steven Gould Axelrod & Helen Deese

Robert Lowell: Interviews and Memoirs : Ed. by Jeffrey Meyers

Unit 6 B

The Emperor of Ice - Cream

-Wallace Stevens

Space for Hints

6.1 Introduction

Wallace Stevens is regarded as one of the most significant American poets of the 20th century. He is a poet with potentialities. He is aware of the condition of life in the twentieth century. According to Stevens, modern poetry is poetry of an act of the mind, an act of finding what will suffice. In his *Collected Poems* (1954), he explored inside a profound philosophical framework the dualism between concrete reality and the human imagination. He is very much a poet of ideas. He is often called a symbolist poet. "The Emperor of Ice-cream" is one of his best known poems. The occasion of the poem is funeral of sorts, but the tone of the poem is not elegiac in nature; instead, this poem has a celebratory air.

6.2 Unit Objectives

- Wallace Stevens' Conception of Poetry
- His method for discovering meaning in the modern Universe
- His beautiful style and imagery

6.3 Unit Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Unit Objectives
- 6.3 Unit Structure
- 6.4 Life and Works
- 6.5 Notes and References
- 6.6 Critical Appreciation
- 6.7 Summation

6.8 Answers to CYP Questions

6.9 Questions

6.10 For Further Reading

6.4 Life and Works

Wallace Stevens was born on the 2nd October, 1879 in Reading, an important city in the American state of Pennsylvania. He was the second child of Garrett Stevens and Margaretha. Wallace began his education in private schools. He first joined a school run by a French lady. Here he learned some French and German. He proved himself a very good student; and his earliest published work almost certainly appeared in the school magazine. At the very start of Wallace's university career, Garrett Stevens recognized his son's skill in the use of words, and visualized a bright future for him as a literary writer.

From his father, Wallace learned some of the most important American values intrinsic of the country's culture. He learned for instance, that work was more important than money, and that action, commitment, self-discipline and self-fulfillment must get precedence over every-thing else.

After leaving, Stevens went to New York, and tried to make a career as a journalist. He got a job as a regular reporter for *The New York Tribune*. However, his work as a newspaper reporter did not suit him; and he was neighed very successful not very happy in that job. He is reported to have told a friend that he decided to be a lawyer in the same way as he had decided to become a Presbyterian and in the same way as he had decided to become a Democrat. His father was a lawyer, Presbyterian and Democrat; and he followed his father in all these three Spheres. His father wrote letters to him regularly during this period. Between 1877 and 1900, the period of his stay at Harward University, he had received more than forty letters from his father. These letters were affectionate, humorous and serious, thoughtful and shrewd.

On returning to Reading from New York to spend a few months, he met a girl by the name of Elsie Moll, and fell in love with her. His love inspired him to write poems addressed to his sweet heart. On her twenty - second birthday, he presented her

Check Your Progress Question

1. From whom
has Stevens
learned
American
values and
culture?

2. He worked as
a reporter in

with a book of verses, a collection of twenty lyrics. These poems were his first major poetic endeavour since his leaving Harvard. By December in the same year (1908), he proposed to her, and she accepted the proposal. All these poems represented the beginnings of "Harmonium", the first volume of his poems to make its appearance as a regular publication. Courtship and business success stirred his poetic faculties and, although the book called "Harmonium" did not evoke much enthusiasm from the readers, it was the first important step in his poetic career. He married Elsie Moll on the 21st September 1909. He was nearly thirty at the time, while she was twenty - three.

Stevens continued writing poetry. It was, indeed, a strange combination. While his professional work was of the most Prosaic kind he was yet able to write excellent poems. Evidently, for him surety claims and poetry were not opposite activities. From another point of view also, his insurance business and his poetry were similar, in both cases he had to make use of language in numerous details of the world and its various spheres. Both the insurance man and the poet were "Men made out of words". ('Men made out of words' is the title of one of Stevens' Poems).

On the whole, Stevens was a very reserved kind of man. Most of the time he kept aloof from people, though he was by no means a recluse. His essential isolation from the people around him made his relations with them somewhat difficult. He felt uncomfortable in company, and never became very intimate with anyone. At the same time, he made no effort to hide his poetic activity.

Eventually, Stevens won recognition as one of America's greatest poets. He was awarded the Bolingen prize in poetry in 1950. He won the National Book Award twice, in 1951 and 1955, and the Pulitzer prize in poetry in 1955. It is believed that towards the end of his life, he secretly got himself converted to Roman Catholicism. He died in Hartford on the 2nd August 1955.

6.5 Notes and References

The title "The Emperor of Ice-cream" juxtaposes permanence (Emperor) and impermanence (ice-cream)

muscular	-	strong and steady
whip	-	stir
concupiscent	-	lustful here, the word might mean 'stale'
wenches	-	young women (of low morals)
Dawdle	-	move slowly
be	-	being; existence; what is
seem	-	last part
dresser	-	a large piece of kitchen furniture with shelves for dishes and cupboards.
deal	-	fur or pine board
lacking	-	without
horny	-	made rough by hard work
protrude	-	stick out; just out
affix	-	fix up permanently.

6.6 Critical Appreciation

The tone of "The Emperor of the ice-cream" is that of the quietitude which weakens philosopher but which also offers some kind of return. Everything in the scene depicted in the poem is rapidly breaking up on wearing away; but the very oldness of things becomes now; the poverty becomes wealth; the vulgarity becomes life and death. In the first stanza of the poem, these transformations are not so prominent. There is something worn and sad about "the muscular one," the idling wenches, and the boys bringing flowers in the last month's newspapers. But even there the tone of absolute permission, the acceptance which comes as a command, the command of a metaphysical emperor of all being and seeming, transforms all those

Check Your Progress Question

3. The boys bring. ____ in the last month's newspapers.

tawdry appearances into an image of the momentarily frozen stream of reality - that is, the image of ice-cream; they all become parts of a simple and delicious dessert which all the people, whether vulgar or not, enjoy.

The gaiety is here not satirical but child-like; and this indicates the relevance of Stevens comment that his daughter particularly liked ice-cream. The people in this scene of the poem are like children at a party; and in that sense they are like everyone else. Everyone cherishes, those moments when somehow the Flux of like can take an apprehensible form, moments of sheer delight in that momentary firmness, as well as in the liquefaction which immediately follows. Like ice-cream, like melts upon the tongue in the very act of tastings; but the point of appetite comes only to the as yet unmelted moment. As children, the vulgar and the noble are one.

Having been prepared for a sort of transfigured ordinariness, the reader finds deeper delights. In the second stanza - the dresser without all its knobs is itself partly undressed; the wench, while she idled away her time, also embroidered her shroud; and now her horny feet are cold though uncomplaining, indeed unspeaking, as if by protruding they ought to speak as the head did, now that all things are reversed. She too is at an unmelted moment, as unappetizing as suganna was appetizing; but disgust can be as exquisite as appetite.

Again, Being itself, or reality itself, is the most exactly fixed appearance which is yet one that will surely soon change. The first stanza concerns sex; the second concerns death; and both are example of moments which perception automatically fixes vividly. But the fixing is so vivid precisely because these are moments of greatest change : Conception and death. In the light of this lamp, one can see that the occasion is not a vigil; it is simply a party. Perhaps in a brothel, at which a woman dies or perhaps is murdered. The order to cover her face must come at the moment of death, not at some time long after, when there has been time to invite people to the party. The lamp is the lamp of appetite or disgust; it is therefore an expression of the most rudimentary will of things, the will of the emperor.

Like many of the other poems is "Harmonium", "The Emperor of Ice-cream" uses Flux and change as the impelling central fact. Also in this, as in many other poems, Stevens wields the weapon of comedy against sentimentalizing or idealizing attitude towards death and change. Furthermore, this poem, like many other famous ones by Stevens swings back and forth between "sun" and "moon", between accepting stark reality and celebrating the imagination.

The Emperor of ice-cream owes its defect to the unions of the grotesque and the quotidian, seeming and being, compassion and fun. Death and the vigil are part of life, no matter how grotesque they may be. The image of ice-cream concentrates the serious and the festive. As such, it is a symbol of life and death. The imperative mood and the finality of the final rhyme in the poem add as much to this stanza composition as the commonplace details : the last month's newspapers in the stanza first, the dresser lacking three glass knobs, and the horny feet in the second stanza. Emperor and ice-cream, though not opposites, have the effect of opposites. The inter-action of such elements is one of Stevens constant means.

"The Emperor of ice-cream" exhibits pre-eminently what Stevens called "the essential gaudiness of poetry : a verbal lavishness and rejoicing which is central to his comic spirit. The more irreverent Stevens becomes, the funnier and better he becomes. It takes courage to declare one's independence, to declare that being is the conclusion of all appearances :

Let be be finale of seem

The only emperor is the emperor.

This famous refrain from this poem expresses of ice-cream Stevens credo. What this refrain means is this: the magnificence which we can achieve in our human state, which is delicious but does not last forever, is the only magnificence; therefore, let us see things the way they really are. Stevens make this poem ring with his celebrated flamboyance, with the essential gaudiness of poetry. This poem shows the right way to conduct a funeral. In other words, we should not be intimidated by death; and the laws of irreverence can be the laws of freedom.

"The Emperor of Ice-cream" is a brilliant illustration of Stevens' ability to write a pure poem without recourse to symbolist metaphysics or exoticism. In this poem, the night, which was imminent in *Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird* and domination of Black, has already descended, extinguishing the life of the woman in the poem but also putting an end to any possibility of protest from her. This poem casts a relentless beam of light upon the common, even repellent, details of the dead woman's room and her corpse. The speaker in the poem insists that the naturalistic "be" should replace the religious or romantic "seem". He suggests a wake devoid of pomp and ceremony. He suggests that the mourners, the muscular cigar-maker, will serve ice-cream. The ice-cream is a symbol not only of the fleeting pleasures of life but also of the materialism or realism proper to one who takes refuge from the imagination. This is not to say that the emperor of Ice-cream is an unimaginative poem.

Stevens referred to this poem as his favourite. He also said that it seemed to him to contain something of the essential gaudiness of poetry despite its commonplace costume. The essential gaudiness of the poem lies in its expressive diction and oratorical flair; but the poem has its costume too. The costume is the wake being held to mourn the death of a woman. Although the poem is, on the surface, an endorsement of "be", it testifies still more eloquently to the power of "seem". We are not surprised to learn that Stevens, when he tried to recall the origin of this poem years later, could remember the "State of mind" which gave rise to it but not the external occasion.

If there are thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird, there are even more than those thirteen ways of looking at the poem called the emperor of ice-cream. Several critics have stressed the relationship of the emperor in this poem with death. But, according to one critic, the emperor in this poem is related to the imagination. In this poem Stevens shows us a man imagining a funny funeral. This interpretation places the entire poem within the mind of a speaker in the poem. But who this speaker is, does not become clear.

According to another critic, this poem, like many of Stevens other short poems, lacks a clear statement of its subject. According to this critic, a tension exists here between reality and appearance, between beauty and ugliness between life and death. The fact is that this is one of the most explicated and criticized of Stevens poems. As such, it suffers not only from simplistic disagreements about symbol referents but also from over-readings which extend into other poems. One of the critics has suggested that the corpse in the poem is a dead person who is too dead. This suggestion simply makes us smile at man's inability to cope with the concept of mortality.

Change and flux are a characteristic of like and of the world. Ice-Cream symbolizes this change and flux; but ice-cream symbolizes also moments of firmness and stability in like. (As ice-cream melts quickly, it symbolizes change and flux; but as it is in a frozen state, it symbolizes firmness and stability). In short, reality is the most exactly fixed appearance which is yet one that will surely change soon. The image of the dead woman (in the second stanza) conveys the same idea.

6.7 Summation

The intricacies of "The Emperor of ice-cream" have been more frequently examined than those of any other of Stevens poems. Ice-cream, contrary of the opinions of some readers, is not death. Ice-cream is an American commodity; its maker is the emperor of boys and girls in the milk-shake paradise of the corner drug-store. The "roller of big cigars" is the tescoon of American business who controls the commodity. The remarkable third line, "In kitchen cups concupiscent curds", describes the rite of the milk shake. It also repeats the sounds of "c" that "squeak all over the place, American "C" of the imagination deliberately repeated in the diction of the comedian as the letter C. The wenches "dawdle in such dress as they are used to wear". The flowers offered in last month's newspapers are flowery surpassed by the image of the daily news-tyrant of the imagination. The Second Stanza presents the famous image of death in an adjacent room. The winding sheet is to be taken from the dresser of deal, lacking the three glass knobs. A woman has died in poverty.

Check Your Progress Question

4. What does ice-cream symbolize?

Horn is the colour-sign of death. It is venus who lies in death, in a room of slovenly ugliness. Her sign is clear. It was she who embroidered her symbolic birds, her Fantails, on the sheet. Her death is a symbol of a greater death in a society of the youthful. The rite of longing and the rite of courtship are at an end. Venus, once an empress of youthful ceremony, gives place to the emperor of ice-cream.

6.8 Answers to CYP Questions

1. From his father 2. *The New York Tribune*
3. flowers 4. change and flux

6.9 Questions

1. Write critical notes on "The Emperor of Ice-cream."
2. Write an essay on Stevens' Poetry.

6.10 For Further Reading

Wallace Stevens: Words Chosen Out of Desire : Helen Vendler

Wallace Stevens: The Poems of our Climate : Harold Bloom

Unit 6 C

The Balloon man

-E.E.Cummings

Space for Hints

6.1 Introduction

Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962) was an American poet, painter, essayist, author and playwright. He is an eminent voice of 20th century poetry. The themes of his poems share an affinity with the romantic tradition. Most of his poems are satirical and address social issues. The most remarkable thing about him is that he is the master of a style. In the poem "The Balloon man" balloonman is symbolic. He is simply a sign of returning spring and focus for childhood's delights in fragile and evanescent toys. The balloonman drawing the children with whistles reminds one of the Pied Piper.

6.2 Unit Objectives

- The image of the balloonman as a guide steering the children to the awakening of adulthood.
- The childish awakening from a state of innocence to knowledge
- symbolic images in the poem *The Balloonman*

6.3 Unit Structure

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Unit Objectives

6.3 Unit Structure

6.4 Life and Works

6.5 Summary of the poem

6.6 Evolution of thought

6.7 Critical appreciation

6.7.1 The reaction of Eddie and Bill to the balloon man's whistle

6.7.2 The reaction of Betty and Isabel to the balloon man's whistle

6.8 Summation

6.9 Answers to CYP Questions

6.10 Questions

6.11 For Further Reading

6.4 Life and Works

Edward Estlin Cummings was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was educated in the classics at Harvard. He joined an ambulance corps in the European War. He was suspected of associating with enemies of France and was interned in France for a time. This experience went in to the making of his book *This Enormous Room* (1922). This is one of the best books to grow out of World War I.

Cummings was also a painter of note. He held various exhibitions of his paintings. He delivered what he called 'non-lecturers' as a lecturer in Harvard University. He wrote and published poems over a period of forty-five years. His position as a poet seems solidly secure.

Cummings is known for his rather ridiculous gimmicks. He avoided all punctuation marks, including capitals, to create the appearance of life flowing on unbroken. Sometimes he carries this gimmick to a ridiculous length. Splitting not only lines but also words. The following passage from his poem among crumbling people is an example :

a
mong crum
bling people (a
long ruined streets.

Cummings' main theme is the threat posed to one's individuality by conventions. He condemns the way our lives are determined by 'most people' and by the artificial aids supplied by science. In his introduction to his collection 'New poems', he writes :

Check Your Progress

1. Cummings delivered non-lectures in _____ university.

Life, for most people, simply
isn't. Take the Socalled
Standard of living. What do
most people mean by
'living?' They don't mean
living, They mean.... (what salesmen)
have succeeded in selling
their wives.

Cumming's significant works are poems 1923-1954, 'The Enormous Room' (1922).
Eimi (1933) and Six Nonlecturers (1953). Selections from his poems are 95 poems
(1958), 100 Selected Poems (1957) and 50 poems (1960)

6.5 Summary of the poem

In the spring season all places are muddy and inscious. The balloonman is not
deterred by such weather conditions. He is lame. When spring arrives, he comes with
his load of balloons. He is cheerful. He whistles aloud. His whistling is heard far and
wide. Boys give up their games and crowd round the balloonman. Eddie and Bill are
two of the boys fascinated by the balloonman. They are no longer interested in the
games that they are playing such as 'marbles' and 'piracies'. They make a bee-line
towards the balloonman. The road is full of puddles. Yet, it all appears wonderful to
the children.

The balloonman, short in stature and limping along the road appears quite
strange to the beholders. He whistles wherever he goes. Girls come dancing to him in
great joy. Betty and Isabel are some of these girls. They stop playing their favourite
games, hop scotch and jump-rope, and go up to the balloonman to buy his wates. One
additional piece of information about the balloonman is given in the last stanza. He is
goat-footed.

Check Your Progress

2. Name the two
boys fascinated
by the
balloonman.
3. Name the two
girls attracted by
him

6.6 Evolution of Thought

'The Balloon man' by the American poet E.E.Cummings is a short poem with four stanzas. The delight felt by children at the sight of a balloon vendor in the main idea of the poem.

The first stanza describes the onset of the spring season. Spring is described as 'just'. That is it has a 'just' role to play in the cycle of seasons it is a pleasant time. Spring brings mud in its wake. The whole world appears to have become sticky and middy. But it also promotes lush and luxurious greenery. The balloonman is identified with the spring season. He shares the irresponsible liveliness of the spring. He is not deterred by the universal mud. Though lame, he hops along with blithe elan. He is an embodiment of the positive forces that spring generates.

The balloonman announces his arrival by blowing a whistle. The whole land reverberates with the whistling sound. Children playing conventional games such as marbles and piracies abandon them and come running to the balloonman. The blend of pleasant and unpleasant qualities that one sees in spring is conveyed by the compound adjective, 'puddle-wonderful' in the second stanza. The roads are full of puddles and yet it is all wonderful.

In the third stanza, the 'queerness' of the balloon man is underlined. His whistle attracts girls now. Two girls are mentioned in particular. They are Betty and Isabel. Just like the boys, these girls also give up their games. They come dancing to the balloon vendor, abruptly giving up their hop-sotch and jump-rope. They are not interested any more in these games.

In the last stanza, yet another quality of the balloonman is stressed. He is associated with the goat, an animal noted for its lustfulness, he goes about blowing his whistle. His ardour is undiminished.

Check Your Progress

4. The balloonman announces his arrival by ____.

6.7 Critical appreciation

"The Balloonman" is apparently about the fascination cast by a balloonman on children. Yet, it has deeper layers of meaning also.

The spring decimates conventional life - styles. E.E. Cummings presents spring as a harbinger of the new and the fanciful. On hearing the balloonman's whistle, Eddie and Bill give up their routine games, marbles and piracies, and go running to the balloonman. The girls Betty and Isabel are also attracted to the balloon vendor. So great is his fascination that they abruptly abandon the hop-scotch and the jump-rope, the games in which they had been absorbed till now. The balloonman vends articles that do not have any lasting value. A balloon bursts all too soon. It is a pity that children are drawn to such worthless trifles. This could be symbol of grown-ups hankering after things of little value. One is reminded of Stephano and Trinculo in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* who swerve from their chosen mission and stoop to pick up the valueless things that they find in Prospero's cave. E.E. Cummings would have us believe that grown-ups are preoccupied with Betty trumpery just as little children are.

The ambivalence of life is another major theme of the poem. Spring is represented as both good and bad. Spring brings in its train not only mud and-puddle but also lush and 'luscious' greenery. The balloon man is 'old' and 'lame'. He is exhausted physically, but not mentally. He is energetic and ebullient, as his whistle reverberating far and wide indicates. He is an embodiment of all that is healthy and salutary in spring. Thus the poem stresses the compendium of good and bad in the world. The use of the compound adjectives 'mud-luscous' and 'puddle-wonderful' illustrates this point.

The character of the balloon man is vividly sketched. He is 'old' and 'lame'. The adjectives 'queer' and 'goat-footed' hint that there is a slight trace of sexual abnormality in him. His whistling evokes the dancing of the girls.

The Balloonman is reminiscent of certain well-known poems. The balloon vendor's attracting boys and girls alike reminds one of the way *The Pied Piper of*

Hamelin casts a spell on both children and rats in Browning's poem. The tireless labouring of the old balloon man naturally links him with Wordsworth's indefatigable leech gatherer. It is probably Cummings's message that hard work attracts all.

Some of the peculiar stylistic features of E.E. Cummings are found in this poem. He avoids punctuation marks in the poem to create the impression that life flows on continuously. The repetition of phrase 'far and wee' is a device that serves to connect the stanzas together.

6.7.1 The reaction of Eddie and Bill to the balloon man's whistle

In the spring season all places are muddy and luscious. The balloonman is not deterred by such weather conditions. He is lame. When spring arrives, he comes with his load of balloons. He is very cheerful. He whistles aloud. His whistling is heard far and wide. Boys give up their games and crowd round the balloonman. Eddie and Bill are two of the boys fascinated by the balloonman. They are no longer interested in the games that they are playing such as 'marbles' and 'piracies'. They make a bee-line towards the balloonman. The road is full of puddles. Yet, it all appears wonderful to the children.

6.7.2 The reaction of Betty and Isbel to the balloon man's whistle

The balloonman, short in stature and limping along the road appears quite strange to the beholders. He whistles wherever he goes. Girls come dancing to him in great a joy. Betty and Isbel are some of these girls. They stop playing their favourite games; hopscotch and jump-rope and go up to the balloon man to buy his wares. One additional piece of information about the balloonman is given in the last stanza. He is goat-footed.

6.8 Summation

The poet says that the balloon man makes his appearance in the spring season. The double facets of spring are underlined here. Spring brings mud in its wake. All roads become muddy. At the same time, there is also lush greenery everywhere. Thus

spring has both advantages and disadvantages. He blows his whistle aloud to make known his arrival. Boys like Eddie and Bill stop playing routine games such as marbles and piracies and come running to the balloon man to buy his filmy wares. This could be a symbol of grown-ups running after valueless objects.

6.9 Answers to CYP Questions

1. Harvard
2. Eddie and Bill
3. Betty and Isabel
4. blowing the whistle

6.10 Questions

1. Comment on the spacing and visual arrangement in the poem 'The Balloonman'.
2. Interpret the poem 'The Balloonman'.

6.11 For Further Reading

E.E.Cummings : A poet's Life by Catherine Reef

E.E.Cummings by Harold Bloom

Pound/Cummings: The Correspondence of Ezra Pound and E.E.Cummings – edited by Barry Ahearn

Unit 6 D

Space for Hints

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

-Walt Whitman

6.1 Introduction

Walt Whitman (1819 – 1892) is a representative of America. He is a seer, a mighty prophet and a liberator of poetry. His poetry is full of patriotic feelings, imagination and love for democracy. His *Leaves of Grass* is his immortal work. There are spontaneity and love for Nature, faith in the goodness of man, individualism, modernity, simplicity of diction, frankness, polish and refinement in verse, oriental element, and egoism in his verses. His prominent themes are the exaltation of the body and of love, and death.

6.2 Unit Objectives

- Evolution of thought as expressed in this poem
- Agony of the male bird
- As an elegy

6.3 Unit Structure

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Unit Objectives
- 6.3 Unit Structure
- 6.4 Interpretation and Appreciation
- 6.5 Notes and References
- 6.6 As an elegy
- 6.7 Summation
- 6.8 Answers to CYP Questions
- 6.9 Questions
- 6.10 For Further Reading

6.4 Interpretation and Appreciation

“Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking” first published in 1860 as a word out of the sea” and in approximately final form by 1871, is Whitman’s most complex and successfully integrated poem. Several effective new techniques are apparent. The influence of music is seen in the device, inspired by the model of the opera, of the bird songs, of fulfilment and transtration, which provide interludes of lyric expression of the feelings.

The five lines from 18-22 present a miniature, compressed version of the Primacy argument of the whole poem

A man, yet by these tears a little
boy again
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting
the waves,
I chanter of paints and joys, uniter
of here and here after
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly
reaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing....

The same qualities with onomatopoeia as well are seen in such phrase as, the mystic play of shadows ‘twining and twisting as if they were alive” - (Walter Sutton) It is this knowledge, this, ‘clue’, which transforms the ‘outsetting’ bard the boy into a poet, and hereafter, in future, he could be “unitor of here and hereafter” in accordance with Emerson’s view of the poet as the, “integrating seer”.

6.5 Notes and References

The cradle endlessly rocking: The sea with its endlessly undulating waves is referred to here. The rocking cradle lulls the baby asleep. The message voiced by the sea has calmed the poet’s troubled mind.

Check Your Progress

1. When was this poem first published?

Out of	:	The message coming from
endlessly	:	Endlessly or eternity is one of Whitman absorbing themes in crossing Brooklyn Ferry, that 'furnish' their parts.
the Ninth month	:	September
the sterible sand	:	This is a symbol of advasting human brief.
fitful	:	not continuous
late	:	risen – risen recently
swollen	:	increased in size
myriad	:	many
sleeping	:	dormant; not awakened
to life	:	to arise
clue	:	clue. a hint which will help Whitman understand his mission in life.
liquid rims	:	the edges of the waves
laving	:	washing; bathing
at random	:	without any planning
crone	:	a withered old woman
swathed	:	wrapped.

The cradle and the infant in the cradle are both wrapped in sweet garments. In the last few lines on the poem, old age ('crone') and infancy, and birth ('cradle') and death are linked up.

6.6 As an elegy

An elegy is a poem in which the poet mourns the death of a great man or of an intimate friend. In 'Lycidas' and 'Adonais' Milton and Shelley mourn the death of their friends Edward King and Keats respectively. 'When Lilacs Lost in the Dooryard Bloom'd' Whitman's mourning is for the assassinated American President, Abraham Lincoln.

In 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' the poet recalls the death of a female rocking – bird profoundly affected him in his boyhood and oriented him towards death when he started writing poems later with the curiosity characteristic of children. The boy Whitman watched a female mocking-bird brooding on four spotted eggs and the male flying around in case any help was needed. One morning the female bird was missing. It had probably been killed by some want on boy. The male bird flew all over the seashore in search of its male. It sang dejectedly and finally reconciled itself to its loss.

The boy Whitman was shattered by the bird's grief. His exposure to death broadened and deepened his attitude to life. Like the Buddha awakening to the bitter realities of life, the poet became conscious of death. Death appeared delicious and no longer dreadful. As always feelings of pity and fear were purged. He became emotionally balanced. The thought of death was as delicious to him as lulla, by is to a sleeping infant.

Like all agencies, Whitman's poem also ends on a hopeful note. The message image of the endlessly rocking cradle, used at the end of the poem, bespeaks the limitlessness of creation. Also, the end of poem reminds one of the beginning, as the cradle image is common to both passage. Thus the poem gains the shape of a cycle. The cyclicity of life followed by death followed by life, is made clear.

The sea also suggests the intertwining of life and earth. The boy sees love in the way waves follow, clasp and melt into one another. The same sea whispers the 'sweetest' message.

Check Your Progress

2. In 'When Lilacs' poem, Whitman mourns the death of ____.

3. In this poem, the poet recalls the death of ____ bird.

.....death death, death, death to the poet.

It is profitable to compare 'out of the cradle endlessly rocking' with 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed'.

Both the poems welcome death, whereas 'out of the cradle' obtrudes on the poet the awareness that love and death are two sides of the coin of life. Lilacs stresses the fact that death is a 'deliverer' putting an end to suffering. The poet envies the slain soldiers because they are at rest where as the living are subjected to pain and misery. Both the poems express hopefulness, though in a subdued manner. The Lilac which blooms regularly at the appointed season is indicative of indestructible life just as the cradle's endless rocking in the other poem opens up 'vistas of never ending life'.

6.7 Summation

In his poem 'Out of the cradle endlessly rocking'-Whitman says that the pain experienced by a bird bereft of its male had a profound effect on him. In the beginning, the two birds were very happy, living together. Their songs expressed their mutual love and joyful union in the mist. The bird's happiness made the poet also happy. The poet was inspired to write many poems in praise of love and the joy it affords. Whitman describes the agony of the male bird bereft of its male. The male bird's painful cry was heard above the loud noise of the waves. The boy Whitman sometimes saw the inconsolable male flitting from bush to bush in search of its male. Sometimes he merely heard its painful cry. The boy was deeply touched by the bird's loss.

Check Your Progress

4. What are the two sides of the coin of life?

6.8 Answers to CYP Questions

1. 1860
2. Abraham Lincoln
3. female
4. love and death

6.9 Questions

1. Justify the title 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking'.
2. Consider the poem 'Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking' as an elegy.

6.10 For Further Reading

Chase Richard. *Walt Whitman Reconsidered*. New York: Stone, 1955.

Allen Gay Wilson. *Walt Whitman Handbook*. Chicago: Packard & Co., 1946.

Erkkila Betsy. *Whitman the Political Poet*. New York: New York University Press, 1965.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE

-Tennessee Williams

7.1 Introduction

Tennessee Williams has emerged as the most outstanding playwright in the American theatre. His first achievement lay in his delineation of Southern gentlewomen. He was particularly effective in his treatment of battered characters who try to retain shreds of their former respectability. The main theme of *The Glass Menagerie* is the need for understanding, tenderness, and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstances. Laura Wingfield is the most pivotal character in the play: it is around her that the play revolves. The use of the greater world of reality surrounding and encompassing the necessary world of illusion is the unifying force in Williams' drama.

7.2 Unit Objectives

- *The Glass Menagerie* as an expressionist poetic play
- *The Glass Menagerie* as a memory play
- Symbols as means of poetic expression to Tennessee Williams

7.3 Unit Structure

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Unit Objectives
- 7.3 Unit Structure
- 7.4 A Life-sketch
- 7.5 Tennessee Williams' place in Modern American Drama
- 7.6 Summary of *The Glass Menagerie*

7.7 Critical appraisal of *The Glass Menagerie*

7.8 Character Sketches

7.8.1 Amanda

7.8.2 Laura

7.8.3 Jim o' Connor

7.8.4 Tom

7.9 Summation

7.10 Answers to CYP Questions

7.11 Questions

7.12 For Further Reading

7.4 A Life - sketch

Tennessee Williams was born in 1914 in Columbus, Missouri. When he was twelve, his father who was a travelling salesman, moved with his family to St. Louis, and both he and his sister found it impossible to settle down to city life. He entered college during the depression and left after a couple of years to take up a clerical job in a shoe company. He stayed there for two years. Spending the evenings in writing, he entered the University of Iowa in 1938 and completed his course, at the same time holding a large number of part time jobs of great diversity. Among his plays *Baby Doll*, *Suddenly last summer*, *sweet bird of Youth*, *A street car named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*. His most recent play is *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*.

Tennessee began as a poet and won an award of 25 dollars when he was pretty young from a woman's club for writing three sonnets dedicated to spring. When he grew up he realized that poetry was not much good for him.

Tennessee Williams was brought up in an atmosphere of the Southern Renaissance. He lived with Aristocratic grandparents in the Mississippi Delta area. At the age of Fourteen, William writes, "I discovered writing as an escape from the world of reality in which I felt acutely comfortable, from poetry to story writing to play writing is the literary journey which Williams undertook.

7.5 Tennessee Williams' Place in Modern American Drama

Drama in the United States of America was always incapable of keeping pace with the progress in other branches of literature. Although by the nineteenth century, the puritan prejudice against theatre had completely vanished and a great many plays had been produced, they were anything but significant. The majority of the plays seldom transcended mediocrity. If the plays were poor, the playwright was also neglected. The tyranny of the actor and the producer held sway in America too, as it did in England. The people's need for drama was satisfied often by imported stuff.

The period preceding the end of the nineteenth century was a period of death in the history of English drama too. The standards of drama had fallen and the theatre had become impoverished. But by the end of the nineteenth century English drama had left the invigorating influence of Strindberg and Ibsen. A sudden revival in drama took place, and George Bernard Shaw more than any other single playwright, contributed to this revival. But the American theatre remained far behind the times.

By the next decade playwrights became increasingly aware of the richness of the American scene. Themes of wide interest and contemporary significance found their way into the theatre by this time. All these writers, however, were handicapped by a tendency towards sentimentality and a readiness to follow theatrical convention.

New Beginnings: The Washington square players :

Broadly speaking modern American drama originates from the little theatre movement of the second decade of the present century. For reasons we shall presently mention, the starting point provided by any of these events is more than a little arbitrary, but a more suitable one would be difficult to discover. But in the early twenties the 'modern drama' was already an old story in major European capitals. America was far behind the times although the American stage knew well Ibsen, Shaw and the rest chiefly in so far as certain isolated plays had succeeded on Broadway.

Check Your Progress

1. Who contributed to the revival of drama?

The New American Theatre:

This theatre was in the beginning merely a theatre which hoped to find an audience for various kinds of play, native or foreign which the conventional Broadway managers believed to be unacceptable to their public. But the little theatre did not keep its monopoly of the new drama for the simple reason that a large audience awaited it than any except the most enthusiastic had ever supposed.

Theatrical Groups :

Between 1915 until the time of Arthur Miller, a good number of "insurgent groups" performed plays which could not have ordinarily found any place in the commercial theatre.

Experimentation:

The American theatre in the 1920's experimented in various directions. It tried to represent life more concretely through abstractions tried to moralize, satirize, lyricize in terms of new manipulations of space and movement, new concepts and sequences of dialogue, new versions of characterization. It also experimented brilliantly in the matter of stage design. The most important characteristic of the American theatre after 1916 is its relentless experimentalism - desire to avoid clichés of plot, characterization, dialogue, acting and staging, which had hitherto tended to make the theatre dull and lifeless.

Expressionism and Tennessee Williams:

Expressionism as an art form was a movement that began in Germany before World War I. It is a revolt against realism by distorting, objecting, exaggerating and breaking up time sequences. In an expressionistic play, as mentioned by Strindberg, anything may happen; everything is possible and probable, Time and space do not exist. On a significant background of reality, imagination designs and embroiders novel patterns. Expressionism is a dramatic technique which enables a dramatist to depict inner reality, the soul or psyche of his personages. There is a deeper and deeper

probing of the sub-conscious, action is increasingly internalised and what goes on with in the soul becomes more important than the external action.

Expressionism Vs Stream of consciousness:

What is stream of consciousness in fiction, expressionism is in drama. An expressionistic playwright depends for correct understanding of human psyche, on slips of tongue, dreams and informal moments of the character. In order to help the audience to understand the inside of the character, the expressionistic dramatist uses symbols, metaphors, fables and allegories. He produces blurred figures on the darkened stage of the mind to personify good or bad motives. Even unseen voices are heard to express the secret thoughts of the character. In short, the expressionist uses the disconnected, distorted and fantastic form of a dream in order to approximate as closely as possible to the stream of consciousness of the given character.

The chief characteristics of Expressionistic plays:

O'Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams are the three major American dramatists who have written plays in the expressionistic manner. The expressionistic dramatic technique, like the stream of consciousness technique in fiction, is concerned with the psychological or inner reality and does follow neither linear plot, nor the clock time.

The expressionistic drama is a kind of dream play in which the dramatist tries to imitate the disconnected but seemingly logical form of the dream. Expressionism is a dramatic technique which enables a dramatist to depict 'inner reality' the soul or psyche of his personages. The emphasis shifts from the external to the inner reality.

Expressionism as an art movement became very popular in Germany. The expressionist explores the idea the source of conduct, until real reality becomes subconscious and character. Very briefly, therefore expressionism may be defined as an attempt to portray inner reality in non-realistic terms by the use of abstraction and symbolism and distortion. The deliberate aim of the expressionist is to express

subjective emotional experience as opposed to the recording of impressions derived from the external world.

Dialogue:

The expressionist does not attempt realistic dialogue. Dialogue is subjected to abbreviations and distortions, so that it becomes frequently, Violent, telegraphic and enigmatic. He produces figures moving obscurely on a darkened stage to personify good or bad motives. He gives words to unseen voices to express the secret thoughts of man's mind.

Plot:

There is no traditional plot in the expressionistic drama. The themes are also untraditional Death, ugliness, horror, emptiness alienation, loneliness, frustration, helplessness, nausea, claustrophobia, lack of communication etc. The plays have no well- developed plot; scenes are not co-related logically.

Characters :

In an expressionistic drama characters are devoid of individuality. The dramatist does not hesitate to present depersonalized characters. The conventional drama brought into light mainly the hero-like qualities of the chief figure. The emphasis was on his virtues, valour, strength, noble ideas like patriotism, love or truism or eradiction of evil. In the expressionistic plays the commonman became the hero and the dramatist through him brought out the hidden weaknesses of man's inner self in general. In an expressionistic play, the number of characters is cut down to the minimum. The attention is focussed on the central figure and the other characters are not individualised. They serve merely as a background to throw into sharp relief the central figure.

Expressionism shares with romanticism an interest in individual consciousness. On the contrary 'expressionism hopes to create through art, forms which posses a great unity than that apprehensible in reality itself.

Williams' views on Expressionism :

In 1915 Tennessee Williams published, as a preface to *The Glass Menagerie* an expressionist - oriented manifesto. Being a "memory play", "The Glass Menagerie" can be presented with unusual freedom of convention. A play employs unconventional technique; it is not or certainly shouldn't be trying to escape its responsibility of dealing with reality or interpreting experience but is actually or should be attempting to find a closer approach a more penetrating and vivid expression of things as they are.

Williams' use of Expressionism in His plays:

The Glass Menagerie is his best expressionistic play. Awareness of the past is always an element in Williams' plays. His characters live beyond the fleeting moments of the drama back into a glowing past and shrinking from a terrifying future. Ex. Amanda of "The Glass Menagerie".

The expressionistic drama covers a concept of theatre as the comprehensive dramatic expression, rather than the more or less literal representation of a subject. Tennessee Williams has successfully used this technique in his plays, more especially in "The Glass Menagerie". He is constantly pre-occupied with human frustration. His characters fail to adjust themselves to their surroundings and their hearts are torn between desire and death. They fail to make any permanent or meaningful relationship with anyone.

Expressionism a German movement in art begun in Germany before the world war I. Major German expressionistic dramatists were Toller, Hasenclever, Kaiser and others, but the father of this technique in drama was the Swedish dramatist Strindberg.

7.6 Summary of *The Glass Menagerie*

The story line of the play is rather simple and clear. Tom Wingfield, a young man with dreams, is bound to his mother and sister because his father vanished one day and left them destitute. The narrator, Tom, dressed as a merchant sailor, enters

from the alley and sets the psychological stage. He also demonstrates that social backgrounds will play a very influential role.

The play is set in the Wingfield apartment in the rear of a building. Thus the setting itself provides a commentary on the situation and destiny of characters whose lives are burning with the slow and implacable fires of quiet desperations.

The Scene is memory and is therefore non-realistic. The narrator in the opening observations highlights the central theme of the play, namely, the dramatic tension between illusion and reality. Characters are shown absorbed in their past days. Laura and Tom are sick of their mother's gentlemen callers.

Laura has not been attending school. Laura admits that after one period of extreme nervousness, during which she vomitted publicly, she had been going out every day as though to school. She tells Laura that there must be more to life than her glass menagerie. She liked a boy named Jim who sang in the senior-class operetta; Amanda is shocked to know about Laura's poor progress at Rubican's Business college; typing instructor tells her that Laura left the college without showing any progress and thus Amanda's hopes and ambitions for her are gone.

Amanda begins to move steadily toward the objective of getting her daughter at least one gentleman caller. Meanwhile, Tom and Amanda quarrel because Tom frequents the movies to fight off his deep frustration at working in the warehouse of continental shoe makers for 65 dollars a month. Amanda glaring up all her resources to enable Laura to have a gentleman caller, and the second exhibiting a head on clash between Amanda and Tom.

In the first part Tom narrates how "the idea of getting a gentleman caller for Laura" became an obsession with Amanda after the fiasco at Rubican's Business college. Amanda being a woman of action as well as words decided to raise money needed to properly feather the nest and plume the bird.

In the second part of the third scene, we see Tom's aversion to the continental shoemakers. He does not know what he is supposed to do. But Amanda calls him a

big "idiot". This plea for sanity in the matter of man-woman relationship and needs of the body is interpreted by Amanda as filth and disease. Soon a more violent quarrel ensues. Tom's mother is unable to understand the nature of his inner struggle, his literary urge to write and create something. She complains that Tom has no right to his job and the security of the family.

Amanda also says to her son to develop tolerance and continue with his job at the ware house. Later on she voices her anxiety to see Laura nicely settled. Amanda is worried at Laura's wasting time in looking at dumb, mute glass animals she speaks nobody, all she does is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn out records. So she tells Tom to find out some eligible young man at warehouse and ask him out for his sisters to meet and get acquainted. Tom leaves in disgust but promises to do something about it.

Scene five opens in the early dusk of a spring evening. Tom then informs Amanda that they are going to have a gentleman caller the next evening. Amanda begins the necessary preparations, the cleaning the food, the clothes, and all Tom leaves warning her not to expect too much-Jim the invited guest does not know he is to be "a gentlemen caller" and Laura is a very strange candidate for romance. Nevertheless, when Tom has gone, Amanda calls Laura to look at the little silver slipper of a moon and a make a wish. When asked what she shall wish for, Amanda tells her: "Happiness! Good fortune!"

Tom's tells us about Jim's past and his acquaintance with him. He knew him slightly in high school. He was the only one with whom Tom was on friendly terms at the ware house. Tom knew that Jim and Laura had known each other at soldan but he wasn't sure if Jim remembered her now.

It is about Five O' clock of a late spring evening when the gentle man caller arrives. Amanda has transformed the Wingfield apartment into a thing of romantic beauty. It is touched with a delicate lemony light. Amanda is seen adjusting them of Laura's new dress. "A fragile unearthly prettiness has come out in Laura, she is like

**Check Your
Progress**

3. Amanda
asked Laura to
make a wish on

piece of translucent glass touched by light, given a momentary radiance, not actual, not lasting”.

Amanda's memories of her youthful glory are revived. She hopes Jim O Connor and Tom will arrive before it starts to rain. Amanda angrily tells her to behave and says she doesn't intend to humour her silliness. Laura protests and wants to be excused but Amanda is adamant. Tom introduces Jim and Laura to each other. While Tom and Jim are conversing about their jobs and cinema, they are interrupted by appearance of Amanda whose girlish appearance shocks both of them. Meanwhile Tom brings the information that supper is ready but Laura is not feeling well and will not be able to join them at the table.

Laura has refused to appear before the gentleman caller, because Jim is the boy she used to like in her school days. But on her mother's insistence she answers the door and admits Jim and Tom and then she promptly becomes ill.

Jim goes to talk to Laura who has lain down to recover herself. Laura shows Jim the year book which contains his picture: he obingly autographs the picture. Although she swears she cannot dance, never has danced, he picks her up and makes her dance. During the dance however, he knocks off the table the prize of her glass Menagerie the delicate unicorn. Laura forgives him; she awards him the unicorn as a Souvenir when she is told that Jim is already engaged to marry another girl who must be now waiting for him at the station. Before revealing this he has kissed Laura on the lips to boost her self-confidence. But noticing the reaction in Laura he decides to tell her the truth and says he will not be able to visit the Wingfield in future. When Amanda learns that they have entertained some other girl's gentleman caller, she is furious and angry. She pities her daughter and chastises her son who threatens to leave.

7.7 Critical Appraisal of *The Glass Menagerie*

This drama of illusion has been much praised for its tenderness, gentleness fragile charm and expressionistic technique. The first of Williams' spectacular commercial success, it launched him upon a spectacular career in the American

theatre. Critics have claimed that he never again succeeded in regaining the height that he here attained, and that his subsequent work, popular though it may have been, is antidimatic. The locale of "The Glass Menagerie" is St. Louise, Missouri; the time of the scene is 1930s.

The Glass Menagerie is a memory play. It was first presented in London in 1948. The play is one of the most outstanding artistic accomplishments of Williams. It is a triumph of second and delicate theatrical manoeuvre; in language it is simultaneously tenderly poetic and brutally analytical and realistic. Since it is a memory play, the entire action is accompanied by music.

The action of the drama:

The action of the drama, involving only four characters, is built around Amanda and her effect upon her son and daughter. Infuriating and pathetic by turns Amanda, an incurable romantic lives by and for the illusions of her youth, when she was-or thinks she was-the belle of a small southern town in the Delta region. She has been deserted by her husband; she now lives only for her children, for whom she now sincerely wants happiness and security. It is the irony of the story, however, that by her romanticised version of her girlhood, and her inability to face the actualities of her situation she has crushed her daughter and alienated her son. At one moment she can envelope herself in exaggerated "Southern charm" at the next, she can be an unbearable shrew.

Laura, the daughter, is the most pitiable of the three members of the family; a cripple and so abnormally shy that she cannot have even the most ordinary relationships with people; she takes refuge in her "glass Menagerie," a collection of small glass animal figurines that symbolizes the fragility of her life and her retreat from reality. She is so hopelessly inadequate to play the role of 'Southern belle' that her mother wishes her to assume or even to make a marriage that will give her security. She has cared for only one boy during her life a pompous high school boy. Jim O Connor is the type to be found in every school or college, who never in later life measures upto his youthful promise. When Tom, who does not know that his

Check Your Progress

4. *The Glass Menagerie* is a _____ play.

sister had ever known Jim, brings him home to dinner, Laura has her one moment of happiness and her one escape from the world into which she has retreated.

Laura has a flash of self confidence, enough to enable us to see what she might become if she could ever break out of her shell, when Jim kisses her. But Jim, crude as he may be is fundamentally honest enough to confess that Laura can expect nothing of him, for he is engaged and will be married soon. And so the momentary illusion of happiness collapses around Laura just as the illusion of success collapses around Amanda. It is the final irony of the play that Amanda, who blames the entire catastrophe on her son, drives him from her in their final quarrel with the accusation that he is a dreamer who lives in a world of illusion.

Tom the frustrated son, is the least successful of the characters, for he is the familiar type of the young man with literary ambitions imprisoned in the deadly monotony of a job in a ware house. Indeed, with his anguished revolt against his family. We can feel desperately sorry for him because he is burdened with the care of a nagging mother and a crippled sister; however, since his inner life and his literary gifts are described rather than seen, he remains unconvincing and shadowy, even though the whole story of the play is revealed through his memory.

The technique of the play

From the point of view of theatrical technique, the play holds much of interest. Williams uses the long and involved stage directions first made popular by Shaw plus a very elaborate and complicated set of stage devices. In the printed versions of "The Glass Menagerie", Williams makes a modified use of this device.

He also employs the device of using Tom as both the narrator and commentators on the action, somewhat as in the role of a Greek chorus, and as a character in the play. Although in a pantomime scene at the end of the play Amanda achieves something like dignity as she comforts Laura, it cannot be said that the play reaches the heights of genuine tragedy. The characters, pathetic though they may be, are too shallow, too trivial, to have in them the qualities of tragic greatness.

In "The Glass Menagerie," the narrator the legends on the screen, the circus music, the light-effect all create a poetic as well as a Brechtian atmosphere. The play, as a whole, uses expressionistic technique. The writer uses the non-realistic technique of presenting the real, reality, poetry, symbols slide projector, music lighting, flash back atmosphere and background all are there to prove the success of the writer's non-realistic technique in "The Glass Menagerie".

The Theme

The main theme of the play is man's emancipation from his family ties. Laura's personal dilemma is part of a greater dilemma; the destruction of a family. So the eternal theme of the play is the conflict between personal freedom and love. Love can sustain itself only in an atmosphere of freedom. It is not surface reality but the inner illusion which forms the theme of the play. Tom Wingfield in the play declares: The play is an illusion, and that his purpose is not to produce a photographic representation of his family's life. All the major characters in the play have their illusions. Because of illusions escape also becomes in part the theme of the play in one sense. The play is concerned with the reality of a broken world.

The motif and vision:

In the words of John Gassner, "In this delicate work Williams retains a highly objective attitude towards his picture of a life of failure. He located his story in the context of the larger world, which demands a wide awake attitude toward a society that, ailing and torn with the conflict of a second world war, challenges our intelligence and capacity for action. Although the play is written in a mood of tenderly trueful reminiscences, Williams exhibits much strength of mind and objectivity.

There is a fragile quality about the play which is apt to break-like the unicorn in the glass menagerie-at the first rule touch of prosy critical comment". The play seems to move between the words of illusion and reality.

7.8 Character Sketches

7.8.1 Amanda Wingfield

Amanda Wingfield is a little woman of great but confused vitality clinging frantically to another time and place. She is not paranoic but her life is paranoic. There is much to admire in Amanda and as much to love and pity as there is to laugh at her.

Amanda is middle - aged woman and an incurable romantic. Deserted by her husband and forced to live in dreary lower middle class surroundings, she retreats from reality in to the illusory world of her youth. Living for her children whom she ardently loves she nevertheless, by her constant nagging her endless retelling of romantic stories of her girlhood. Her inability to face life as it is, stifles her daughter Laura, and drives away her son Tom. She doesn't give up trying to find happiness and genuine sincerity for her family in the face of perhaps greater obstacles than she ought to have face.

Amanda is a middle-aged belle southern, hailing from the blue mountain, garrulous and silly, narrow and spinsterish in her attitudes towards life. She speaks only of a little physical defeat and distract attention from it by developing charm and vivacity; she is not entirely blind to the situation. She is anxious to get a home and husband for her daughter. She wants her daughter to occupy a place of position. Amanda has to face is that she has to act the role of father as well as mother. She tells Tom that the future becomes the present, the present the past, the past turns to everlasting regret if one does not plant for it. She is a sweet mother, a pathetic creature and at the same time a disgusting shrew. According to Amanda, for whom the word instinct is a term only for Christian adults should be connected with things of mind and spirit.

Amanda is shrewish, nagging and sometimes vulgar. She is genuinely tender, loving, and in her own way, heroic. She is a great artistic triumph of Williams.

7.8.2 Laura Wingfield

The plight of Laura is given a luminous expression. She is unable to adapt herself to the business college education and therefore she lives in a world of candle light and fantasy. She spends her time polishing the tiny glass animals and listening to her father's old phonograph records. She hood winks her mother by spending her time on visiting zoos, sightseeing and film going to give an impression to her mother that she is still attending the college. All these are her favourite pastimes.

For a while she believes in her mother's word and does not resist when Jim kisses her. At once she becomes hopeful of her future. But very soon Jim's disclosure of his impending marriage with Betty shatters her hopes

Laura is crippled daughter of Amanda Wingfield. She is so shy that she finds ordinary human relationships almost unbearable. She is totally unequipped for the romantic role in which her mother has cast her. She takes refuge among her glass figures of the Glass Menagerie that is the symbol of her fragility and her retreat from reality. Although she represents fragile beauty, Laura is also a human being. She is kind-hearted and she is sensitive both to her mother's strength and weaknesses, and to Tom's hopes and frustrations. She is a delicate and charming sufferer who is helpless in the face of her physical handicap.

She is a nervous type of girl. She is unlike her mother: her mother is a lady of action as well as words. Laura in contrast to her, is neither vocal nor active. She is simply a silently suffering character, pathetic and moving.

7.8.3 Jim O Connor

Jim O Connor is the gentle man caller. He is a nice, ordinary young man. Working with Tom Wingfield he is invited to dinner and brings Laura one moment of confident happiness before the crude but honest Jim tells her that he is engaged to some other girl. Tom and Laura know what they want in life and they are not after worldly success.

Check Your Progress

5. Name the gentleman caller.

Some of Laura's best scenes are with Jim O Connor, the gentle man caller, who is to her a hero and not a dull extrovert or a paragon of the ordinary. Williams through these, few lines, has given simply and most effectively the character of an unimaginative ambitious and very average young white collar worker.

Jim is won by Laura's unique charm, but he is more obviously impressed by his own power. He sets out to build up her confidence in herself. He kisses her and realizes his mistake, for seeing her bright, dazed look, he dimly senses her feelings. He talks of what love has done for him, and of the power of love, which has made a man of him. He voices his creator's own theory that love can change the whole world romantic love, that - and so he comes a mouth piece for the playwright for humour and comic effect.

7.8.4 Tom Wingfield

Tom Wingfield, son of Amanda, and the narrator of the play can be called the hero of the play only in the traditional sense in the playing an important role in the action of the play. He is a handsome youngman, ever smiling, and enters dressed as a merchant sailor to narrate the events and incidents in the play.

It is through Tom's memory that the story of "The Glass Menagerie" is seen. Professing to literary ambitions, he is tapped by his dreary surroundings, the care of a nagging mother and crippled sister, and the stifling monotony of a job in a warehouse.

Tom is a romantic adventurer and resembles his father in several respects. He is an itinerant dreamer full of illusions. He thinks that he can be happier by writing poetry. He is a seeker of freedom.

On the whole Tom is a frustrated romantic. He is fond of films and fond of reading sexy novels like those of D.H. Lawrence. Though a loafer in wilderness, he has a sense of responsibility to the family. That is his tragedy. He has to obey his mother and develops tolerance. He wants to help his sister, that is why to please his mother and sister he invites his co-worker on dinner as a gentleman caller. He is the family's bread-winner and sticks to the job which he dislikes only to fetch money for

his mother and sister. But at the same time he knows that he is wasting his life in that "celotax interior with fluorescent tubes", and that he cannot endure much longer acquiescing to Amanda's illusions if he is ever going to come to grips with life.

He is a part of the dilemma of his family and he cannot break completely free from it wherever he may go and whatever he may do, he will always be more faithful than he has intended to be.

7.9 Summation

Tennessee Williams has portrayed with great truth the plight of the sensitive and delicate individuals who cannot stand the shattering touch of reality. The dramatic language is vivid, colourful and evocative. He is a lyric dramatist. To him, symbols are an important means of poetic expression. The use of Tom as narrator presents the drama with a double focus: the world of reality and the world of illusion. Williams' knowledge of visual and musical effects, coupled with a genius for dialogue, have made *The Glass Menagerie* his most effective poetic work.

7.10 Answers to CYP Questions

1. Bernard Shaw
2. Germany
3. moon
4. memory
5. Jim O' Conor

7.11 Questions

1. Write a critical note on illusion as theme and symbol in "The Glass Menagerie".
2. How far is the conflict between freedom and love the central theme of "The Glass Menagerie".
3. The technique of 'The Glass Menagerie' is a combination of both expressionism of the post world war I and the present day cinematic vision of reality. Elucidate.
4. Trace the elements of expressionism in "The Glass Menagerie".
5. Bring out the autobiographical element in "The Glass Menagerie".

7.12 For Further Reading

The Glass Menagerie: an American Memory

- Delma Eugene Presley

American Expressionistic Drama

: Rama Murthy, V.

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

-Arthur Miller

8.1 Introduction

Arthur Miller is one of the trifle pillars of American theatre. *Death of a Salesman* Miller's most famous play written in 1947 was hailed as a modern classic and has put him among the foremost playwrights of this century. He is concerned with the theme of man being a victim of the evils of a commercial society. The play is a personification of the American dream of success; rather to put it correctly the play is a personification of the failure of the success myth.

8.2 Unit Objectives

- Miller's conception of drama
- Father-son relationship in *Death of a Salesman*
- Technique in *Death of a Salesman*

8.3 Unit Structure`

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Unit objectives

8.3 Unit structure

8.4 Life and works

8.5 Scene wise summary

8.6 Story

8.7 Requiem

8.8 Character Sketches

8.8.1 Willy Loman

8.8.2 Linda

8.8.3 Biff

8.8.4 Happy

8.9 As a modern tragedy

8.10 As a new experiment in form and content

8.11 Failure of Willy Loman: An analysis

8.12 Summation

8.13 Answers to CYP Questions

8.14 Questions

8.15 For Further Reading

8.4 Life and Works

Arthur Miller, the most celebrated American playwright of the two decades following the Second World War, was born in 1915 in a middle-class Jewish family in New York. His father Isadore Miller was a businessman. Family loyalty was strong among the Millers. Arthur grew up a tall, gaunt, high school football star, but he was prevented from going to college because of the Depression which affected his father's business. For a time, he worked as a clerk in an automobile warehouse - an experience he dramatised later in *A Memory of Two Mondays* (1955). Tolstoy captured his imagination. He says he read through *War and Peace* while commuting on the sub-way. But he also saved enough from his job to go to Michigan University. He took a course in journalism. Three of the dramas he wrote at this time won him national awards.

After graduating, he worked for the Federal Theatre project. When the project was dissolved, he turned into a radio scriptwriter; he was rejected for military service because of a football injury. But he made good use of the war experiences of others in writing. The story of G.I. Joe (1949) *A Situation Normal* (1944). *Focus* (1945) is a novel castigating anti-semitism. His first play, "The Man Who Had All The Luck"(1944), had only a four-day run in Broadway. But "All My Sons" (1947) had quite a long run and won him the critics' Award. It established him as a recognised playwright.

In 1949 appeared "Death of a Salesman". It was a phenomenal success. Its 742 performances put it among the fifty longest recorded Broadway runs. It received again and again, televised, and studied as a profoundly symbolic criticism of the American worship of material success.

In 1950, Miller adapted for the American stage Ibsen's "An enemy of the people". His growing concern about the witch hunt unleashed by Mc Carthyism in the fifties is reflected in the crucible (1953). It won him the Antoinette Perry Award. "A view from the Bridge" (1955) is a tragedy built around sexual rivalry. In 1956, Miller himself was subpoenaed by the congressional house committee on un-American activities. He readily testified about his own activities and beliefs but refused to inform on other writers and artists. For this he was cited for contempt and fined. But his appeal was upheld and he was acquitted. Miller was, however, lacerated by the hearings as well as by the inevitable publicity it produced.

The same year witnessed also personal upheavals. His fifteen-year-old marriage broke up a particularly harrowing failure to a writer so committed to family loyalties. He then astounded the world by marrying the film actress, Marilyn Monroe, the sex symbol of generation. For Miller apparently, she was a symbol of an admirably native innocence in a world of complexity and corruption. In 1957, he wrote a short story, "The Misfits", which he subsequently adapted as a film script expanding it to provide a substantial role for his wife. But before Columbia produced it in 1961, the tempestuous Miller -Monroe relationship had ended in a much publicised divorce (1960). Two years later, Marilyn committed suicide. Miller's "After the Fall" (1964) deals with the introspection of a man whose two marriages have crashed. It is intensely personal, and its autobiographical element was a red rag to the critics who thought that Miller had unduly vilified Marilyn. But many consider it quite a good play.

In 1965, appeared "Incident at Vichy" based on the jew-hunt in Occupied France. A collection of short stories, " I don't need you any more", was published in 1967. Two years later, he toured Russia with his third wife, the Austrian - born photographer, Ingeborg Morath. In collaboration with her was written "In Russia"

(1969). "The Price", staged about the same time, also has for its theme a young man's preoccupation with a sense a private responsibility and guilt. The latest Miller play is "The creation of the world and other Business (1972). Many critics do not approve of its facetious treatment of the genesis. Miller has also been contributing articles to the leading magazines of America and England.

Many honours have been showered on him. The University of Michigan awarded him an Honorary Doctorate. The National Institute of Arts and Letters made him a Member and gave him a Gold medal for Drama. Altogether, Miller has come to be regarded as one of the most formidable and serious American playwrights of our time.

8.5 Scene wise Summary

Act 1, Scene 1

The action of the play takes place in Willy Loman's house and yard, on the day of his life on earth. Before we start reading the play, a look at Miller's elaborate stage direction is necessary as it makes it obvious that the setting is not conventional but it is purposely made non-realistic. The salesman's house is shown in the back of the towering and angula's building of New York. Amidst this concrete jungle, the house of Willy Loman appears like a cage. The foreground area is shown in orange light. Even before any action starts on the stage, the flute plays soft music. "Small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon". The effective use of light and music creates "an air-of dream that clings to the place, a dream rising out of reality".

Miller's technique also uses a "transport set which is frequently used in modern theatre. Actually it is quite simple. There are no walls dividing the various parts of the house. The various rooms, drawing rooms, bed room, kitchen etc, are shown only in outline; only the effective use of light and darkness indicates change of scene. When action takes place in the living rooms only that position of the stage is lighted and the rest of the house is in darkness. Without any actual shifting of person, materials of backdrops change of scene are effected by the shifting of spotlight. Sometimes multiple action takes place in different parts of the house. The persons in

Check Your Progress

1. _____
indicates the
change of scene.

one area are not supposed to know what is happening in another bedroom, where as the audience are able to watch and follow all together. An understanding of Miller's stagecraft with his own technique is necessary of the better understanding and appreciation of the play by the reader or the spectator.

8.6 The Story

William Loman, a tired old man of sixty returns home carrying two large sample cases after a hectic sales trip. It is never made clear throughout the play, what it is he actually sells. On seeing him, his wife finds worried him; he has come back before his scheduled time. Willy also appears not normal, both physically and mentally.

He tells Linda that while driving he had forgotten where he was going. He kept on the driving off the road. He tells Linda that while driving, he opened the wind shield of the car toilet in fresh air. This worries Linda further, as she knows that his present car's wind shield could not be opened. Only his old car ten years ago had a wind shield which could not be opened. Linda tries to be helpful by offering sandwiches and aspirin, but she knows that he has reached his breaking point. She tells him kindly that a non-travelling job, stationed at New York might help to ease his tension.

His two boys, Happy and Biff, are home and are sleeping in their bedrooms. Willy is not happy with Biff who is wandering in the west, doing jobs as a farm hand. Now ten years gone and he is yet to settle down in a nice city job. He calls him a hazy bum, while Linda tries to defend her son. But soon Willy contradicts himself and puts the blame for his son's failure on the American society. He over-reacts and exaggerates Biff's personal charm as a high school kid. He goes on a reverie of his younger days when they had a garden and a backyard with two semi trees. The boys were robust, young and loved and admired their father. Willy in turn lavished love on them and pinned on them his high hopes for the future. Often he talks to himself and laugh aloud when he is alone. Now Willy feels defeated and laughs around. This dreams of Willy longing for pastoral beauty, fragrance of flowers, and arcadia reaus

all alone the plays, specially whenever he recognise that his" vision of success is far from truth.

Willy goes into the kitchen, while Linda resumes to her bedrooms. The conversation between Willy and Linda is overhead by Happy and Biff who are awakened by the commotion. Now the light, shifts to the boy's room indicating a change of scene. Only Willy mutterings and turbulent talking to himself are heard by the audience.

Biff is the elder and is described by the author as less successful and self-affected. 'His dreams are stronger and less acceptable than Happy's. He has tried his hand on my job. He is thirty four and yet to get settled. He is presently working as a farm hand in Trances and has dreams of owing a ranch. Just now he is home for a short visit as he has suddenly became homesick. He has had a small quarrel with his father, soon on his arrival and is sour about it.

Happy is tall, handsome and has a permanent weakness for girls. He is also lost, though he seems outwardly more content. He is thick skinned and is not as sensitive as Biff to their failure.

Both start discussing their father talking to himself hardly in the kitchen. Now it is their turn to become nostalgic about the good old days when they stayed in their house as kids, slept in the same bedrooms as now and made plans for their future. They had their deiced girls whose company they enjoyed as adolescents. Even now Happy wastes a lot of money on call girls.

Happy now tells Biff that their father Willy in his mumbling talks to Biff only all the time. Probably he is depressed by the fact that Biff only at the time, has not settled down in a good job. The boys have a frank discussion about themselves. Biff tells Happy that he has tried his hand on several jobs, but everything turns out to be the same. He however likes a farm job in the county better than an office job in a city. Every year in spring he remembers his home, suddenly realises that he is roaming like a tramp, without a permanent job or a family of his own. Then he becomes homesick and comes back. Happy has a city job, earns enough to maintain an apartment, wastes

money on call girls. He also is not satisfied with himself. He also felt lonely. His dream is to become rich and pompous like the merchandire manager of his company. Biff wants him to go with him to the west so that together they can start their ranch. But Happy is not suited to that kind of farm job. Both of them long to marry good girl, who would be devoted to them, like their mother who is devoted to father. But it is hard to find such girls with family loyalties nowadays.

Finally Biff discloses his latest idea of contracting Bill alive, his former employer, and getting a loan of ten thousand dollars, with which he can buy and run his own ranch. However he is hesitant whether Bill Oliver still likes him, as he had earlier stolen his cartoon of basket balls. Biff has been in the habit of stealing small things. He knows it is wrong, but somehow Willy Loman had failed to correct him in his adolescence, because of his excessive love for his son.

Now the two brothers hear their father's voice from the kitchen. Willy is talking to Biff imaging him to be small boy, Happy tells Biff not to leave dad in this upset condition and go away. However Biff is angry with his stupid, selfish father and swears. Then they go to bed.

Now stage light shifts to the kitchen and shows Willy Loman opening the refrigerator and talking to an imaginary Biff in front to him, polishing their car. Young Biff and young Happy appear on the stage carrying rags and pail of water. Now we know this is projection of Willy's memory into the past. Willy presents them a bag. Biff shows him a football which he has actually stolen from the school, but tells that the coach has given it to him so that he can practise passing. Willy knows that it is stolen, but does not scold or correct his son, but laugh at his small theft

The sons admire their father who reals off at length about his successful business trips. Willy promise to take them along in his trips during their summer holiday. Biff is due to play a football match. Actually he is the captain of his team and has a lot of fans, both boys and girls. Just then Bernard an earnest and loyal boy and a classmate of Biff enters and tails uncle Willy that Biff is likely to fail as he has not studied Maths at all. Barnard is studious whereas Biff is frivolous. Willy refuses

to recognise this truth and instead says that Banard is not liked by people whereas Biff is only too well liked by people. According to his faith, the man who creates personal interest, alone will come up in career and society.

The young Linda appears carrying the wash. The boys help her to hang them for the drying. Biff has a lot of friends who wait for him and are ready to do any them. Willy watches his son ordering his friends. Linda and Willy calculate the amount Willy has made that week, Willy first buffs stating high figures, but soon confesses that he has failed to reach his target and has made only two hundred dollars for the whole trip. But they have a lot of installment payment to make for the refrigerator, vacuum cleaner, washing machine and for mending the roof of the home. Unless he makes more next week they will be in soup. Willy now recognises the truth that he has no personal charm, which can do wonders in his sales career. He has to slog even twelve hours a day, just to make seventy to hundred dollars a week.

Linda talks encouragingly, lovingly and with understanding. Willy is touched by her concern for him and declares his eternal love for her to underline the irony of his statement a woman's laughter is heard. Slowly this other woman of Willy with whom he has been friendly in Boston and to whom of Willy with whom he has presented Linda stacking comes on the stage and starts talking to Willy. Willy immediately forgets Linda and is pleased by her flattery that he is handsome man. This scene is again a projection of Willy own conscience and his inner self which chides him for his affair outside.

Willy comes back from the lighted area as this other woman disappears into darkness. He promises to make up with Linda.

Bernard runs in with many complaints on Biff that Biff is not studying has failed in maths, and he is driving a car without license. Linda for her part complains that he is rough with the girls and has stolen that football. But Willy is blind to his son's faults. He drives away Banard and Linda with harsh words and refuses to recognise the truth about his son.

As he speaks she leaves, symbolic of the past slowly recede. It is night again and the apartment houses are seen in the background. Willy is back in the present and is alone in the kitchen. Happy comes down and tries to calm his father, Willy's neighbour Charley signals Happy to go, and sits down with Willy to keep him company. Together they try to play card, while Charley tries to put same sense into Willy who is present upset that Biff's is going away again.

Charley offers Willy a job, but Willy refuses it saying that he already has very good job. Again with cards in hand, Willy goes into another reverie. This time, his brother Ben enters the lighted spot carrying a valise and an umbrella. Ben is in a hurry and Willy address Charley as Ben. Coming to the present, Willy tells Charles that Ben is dead and his wife in Africa. Willy regrets that if he had gone with Ben to Alaska, earlier everything would have been different for him. All the while the vision of the Ben also talks to him and we find Willy now talking in reality to Charley and at once talking to an imaginary brother also simultaneously. Charley is confused with Willy's replies to his queries. Meanwhile Ben and Willy carry to their separate conversation. Willy picks up the small quarrel with Charley over the card game as if to dispel his own confusion with two people. An angry Charley leaves and once again the scene changes to the past.

Linda also enters and joints their conversation Ben is on a visit and Willy eagerly asks him about how and when he went away from the family. Ben replies that at age of seventeen he went 'into the jungle of Africa following his father, who had even earlier gone to Alaska. At twenty one Ben came out of the jungle rich. He narrates this adventure to young Biff and Happy and tells them, whether in jungle or stock exchange fighting fair will never pay. When Ben left, Willy had been only three years and eleven months old. Their father was a rough and tough man who would start in Boston in his wagon with all his family, drive across the country, selling flutes. He played the flute also well.

Charley enters in knickers and warns Willy not to allow Biff to go on stealing building materials from the apartment house sites. But Willy laughs it off saying that the watchman is chasing Biff and Charley warns him that his fourlers sons will land

up in jail ultimately. But Ben before leaving assures Willy that the sons are being brought up in the right spirit, to fight and get rich, even employing unfair means. This is a criticism on American materialism society, which means in the pray in many places Willy's method of bringing up his son on false values of pride and riches, even encouraging their pilfering and stealing habits is being endorsed by Ben. Willy wants his son to treat his world as a jungle and to grab whatever they can, as there are no laws of morality in a jungle. Here we also get a glimpse into Willy childhood. His father disappears when he was four years old. His brother left immediately and soon his mother also died, leaving Willy an orphan child. Thus he has grown up to be restless wandering type, without any regard for social law of morality.

Willy goes out for a walk even as Linda paints out that he badly needs some rest. Biff and Happy came in and all discuss Willy's strange behaviour. The boys love their mother, but do not get on wall with their father. Linda complains that they should come home more often and show that they have love and respect for Willy. She accuses Biff of not getting settled in life and that is the reason for Willy being upset. Linda says plainly to Biff, "If you don't have any feeling for him, then you can't have any feeling for me. Biff argues that Willy has no character. This angers Linda who defends him saying, "then make Charley your father". Though he is not rich over a fine character or a great man, he is also a human being and at the time a crisis attention must be paid to him and he cannot be allowed to die like an old dog. Here Miller makes Linda deliver the message of this play. Willy's condition represents not just a private individual's but that of a whole lot of aged and rue less men, discarded both by family and society in this modern and the materialistic age.

Willy has worked hard for a life time, but is not provided with any security for his old age. When he has become old, he is considered incompetent and thus loses his salary and later evens his job. But his employers is not worse than his son, as they also do not care for him, now that they also get their money somewhere else. Linda pathetically implores Biff and Happy to stay here and talk to him and find out his inner griefs. She knows that he is very upset and has been trying to kill himself. Last year he smashed up his car, but it was later found out by the insurance company to be

not just an accident but a purposely created 'accident'. Willy was saved because the water in the river was shallow. Even now he keeps a length of rubber pipe with a little attachment, behind the pure box in the career. Linda does not want to hurt his feeling by removing it, in spite of the risk it causes. Biff agrees to stay bear and try for some job here. But Happy accuses him that his easy and frivolous habits must be courted if he wants to survive in this business world. He is considered "Crazy" says Happy. Willy refuses at, this moment. He has overheard his son's conversation and resents being caused 'Crazy' by them. Linda intervenes and pacifies him.

Happy persuades Biff to go and meet Oliver the next day. He says that the two can join together in selling sports goods. They can arrange to play exhibition matches of basket ball and waterproof, which will boost their advertising. Willy gets enthusiastic about it and advises to behave in a nature way when he will meet Oliver to talk business. Biff gets initiated at Will's ordering him and mother. But Linda is all sweetness to Willy even when he yells at her. She tries hard to smoothen the function between the father and sons. Happy exclaims in admiration "What a woman"! They broke the mould when they made her". For their mother's sake atleast Biff decides to meet Oliver the next day. The boy enter Willy bedroom and wish him good night as a sort patching up foe their earlier highhanded behaviour. Willy goes to bed enthusiastically recalling the earlier day when Biff was a great football hero. Biff silently goes into the kitchen and finds out the length of rubber tubing form behind the heater. He removes it and takes it along with him before he goes to his bedrooms.

The first Act ends in a rather conciliatory note. By the end of the Act the Loman family gets excited with false encouragement and optimism about the autome of Biff's meeting with Oliver the next day.

Though there are no scene divisions as in the earlier play, there are many changes in action, within the first act. There is no need for the dropping and rising of curtains but quick change in action are effected by shifting the spot right to different rooms and different characters. The actual time covered is a few hours from evening to night, but we have known enough of the part life of the Loman family and their characteristic peculates.

Act - II

As in the earlier Act, the curtain rises with soft music playing in the background. It is the next morning and Willy is seated at his breakfast table sipping coffee and Linda is by his side pouring him coffee. Willy has slept nicely till ten O' clock, while the boys have left early at eight O' clock. Willy talks enthusiastically of retiring into a country house, where he would build separate apartments for his two sons, all on the vague hope of his son succeeding in getting a loan of ten thousand dollars from Oliver.

Linda reminds him to ask his employer for a non-travelling job, stationed at New York. She also tells him to get some advance as they have to make some installment payments. Willy gets out of his joyous mood and curses the new machines of the modern age. His car, fridge and other gadgets, have broken down, even before their last payment is made. "I'm always in a race with the junkyard" he complains. Linda also tells him that this is the last payment on the house and afterwards it is totally theirs. Twenty five years ago, when Biff was nine years old, they had bought it, but they are yet to own it.

Willy is ready to leave and Linda tells him at Frank's that his sons have arranged for a small party for him at Frank's cheap house. Actually it is Biff's own idea. As Willy leaves the house the phone rings and Linda lifts it. It is a call from Biff who is waiting in Oliver's office. Linda begs Biff to be nice and understanding towards Willy, which alone can save his life : She hopes for the best for both Willy and Biff.

Meanwhile the light shifts and we see Howard and Willy in Howard's office. He had just got a wire recorder in which he had recorded the singing of his daughter. He is thrilled with this new machine, which he can use for dictation. Ignoring Willy's request for some serious talk he goes on playing the voices of his daughter, son and his wife, much to the annoyance of Willy.

At last Willy is able to make his request for a change of job in New York. But Howard is not willing to make any concessions for Willy, even though he had been

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2. Willy Loman hopes to get a loan of ten thousand dollars from ____.

working for the firm for such a long time, to be exact, he has started working even before Howard was born. But business is business and in that 'jungle' no mercy could be shown to anyone. Willy boasts of his adventurous father in Alaska and his more successful brother in Africa. But he himself had become a salesman taking Dave singleman' a successful salesman of eighty fexea, to be his model to follow. But the respect commanded by a salesman of yesteryears is no more now in this profession. Willy yells and then cringes before Howard saying that he will go to Boston. But Howard fires him heartlessly saying that he is old and upset and needs rest badly.

Howard leaves the room abruptly and a thoroughly shaken Willy sits down to collect himself. Involuntarily he goes into one of his delusions. His brother Ben enters the stage (i.e.) the mind of Willy with his valise and umbrella, symbols of his success and adventure in far-off lands.

Willy starts talking to an imaginary Ben, who as usual, is in a hurry to board a ship in an hour. Ben wants Willy also to join him and assist him in his business. At this time Linda enters as of old with the wash. Linda refuses Ben's offer by boasting that "he's got a beautiful job here". But Ben asks wills "What're you building here? Lay your hand on it." Just for a second Willy realises the truth of Ben's statement, but again Linda reminds him of the example of the successful salesman Dave singleman. Willy picks up the thread and also shows his boys Biff and happy who entre the scene now and says that they are his true assets and hopes for a great tomorrow. Ben leaves and with him an opportunity is also lost.

The reverie continues in which Willy is getting ready to go to the clubhouse to watch the baseball match at Ebbets in which biff is playing. The family including Linda makes a lot of fuss over the here Biff. But Charley enters, who knows not much of baseball of football, shatters Willy's dreams by saying that Ebbets had just blown over. May be for fun and asked Willy "When are you going to grow up?" This comment sums up the weakness of Willy's character - immaturity.

But by the time Willy (of the present) has left Howard's office and has reached the office of Bernard, who has now grown up, studied well and settled nicely

as a successful lawyer in Washington. But Willy continues to live in his dream world and showers abuses on Charley, who asked him earlier to 'grow up'. Bernard's secretary cannot manage this old man, who is talking to himself. Bernard makes courteous enquiries of Willy and his sons. Willy, as usual boasts off about Biff "doing very big thing" in the west. But soon Willy breaks down and asks Bernard what is the enrolled secret of his success and why his sons have not made it. Bernard replies candidly and asks Willy, why Biff had not enrolled in the summer school and pass his maths in the final year of school.

Bernard knows that Biff was eager to complete the course and had gone to Boston to seek his father's advice. But something happened in Boston to thoroughly upset him that he came home and silently burned his sneakers in the caller. He never attempted to complete his school finals. Later also he tried his hand at several jobs. That had been a bad turning point in his life and Bernard wants to know what it was that upset him that he gave up. This question is resented by Willy who knows the reasons why Biff got upset. Any way Bernard leaves in hurry to catch a train to go to Washington, where he is going to argue a case in the Supreme Court. But he is so humble that he is going to play tennis there. He asks Charley for a loan of a hundred and ten dollars.

Only the previous night, Charley had offered him a job and Charley renews his offer. But Willy is too proud to work under him and refuses his offer. Charley gives him some money to pay his insurance. He tells him that "being impressive or being well liked" are the factors that least matter in the business world Willy has got to realise it, if he has to be a good salesman. Willy says that Charley is his only true friend and leaves.

The scene changes and we see a waiter, Stanley, laying an able for Happy, who enters the restaurant. He orders lobsters with champagne for his brother and father, who are soon to join him. Just then a glamour girl enters and happy forgets everything else on seeing her. He invites her to taste champagne on his account. Biff also comes in now. Happy introduces this girl to him, but Biff is not interested in any girl and wants to know why Dad has not arrived yet. Happy invites the girl to join

them and also bring a friend to give company to Biff. The girl goes out to phere and meanwhile Biff narrates what happened at Oliver's.

Biff had to wait for six hours before he could meet Oliver contrary to their expectations. Oliver did not remember Biff and did not stop to talk to him. Biff could not explain to him their new idea for a business deal. Biff was mad when everyone left and he was alone in the reception room, he went into the office and stole Oliver's fountain pen and ran down all eleven flights why he did so, the court explain, may be it is his old habit or he did so just out of spite. Now he wants to make a clear breast of everything to his Dad, so that Willy will have no more false illusions about his son. Happy advises him not to upset Dad, by telling him the truth. He can tell him some nice lie to keep him in a good him the truth. He can tell him some nice lie to keep him in a good mood. But ignoring him Biff tries to tell him the truth when Willy comes in, Willy also tells them that he got fired. Willy goes into one of his reveries, even before Biff tells him the facts about his meeting with Oliver.

In his dream he is back again in his olden days and young Bernard comes and tells them that Biff has flaunted in maths. But Willy considers this a sort of pestering and brushes him aside. He does not listen to Biff's narration, but is lost in his own dream world. Amidst all this commotion, Biff manages to tell Willy how he happened to take Oliver's gold pen from his table and walk out with it. Willy shouts at him for stealing pen. For the first time in his life he calls it 'theft' and shouts "You're no good! You're no good for anything." Biff feels sorry and promises to make up. But Willy is so thoroughly shaken by the two failures of the day, one, and his own, in losing his job, and the second, his son's in failing to get his like and crazy man.

Happy tries to pacify him and once more Willy becomes hopeful and orders Biff to meet Oliver again the next day, return the pen and talk business. But Biff can't do this as he knows his true relations with Oliver. Off the stage, a woman's laughter is heard which also chides Willy - "When are you going to wake up?" Once again there is a memory scene and this is the voice of the other woman with when Willy was spending the night in Boston. When a young Biff came to seek his advice after he flaunted his math and found out the true careers of his father, and went away deserted

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3. Who stole
Oliver's
fountain pen?

and desperate. Now in this memory scene we get the answer to Bernard's question 'what happened there that night at Boston to upset young Biff, that he came back home, burned his most favourite sneakers silently in the cellar and gave up his life altogether?

Here in this changed scene of a hotel room in Boston, a woman wakes up Willy in the middle of the night and asks him to answer the knocking at the clear. Very reluctantly Willy opens the door only to find young Biff. Biff tells him that he has not scored enough marks to graduate and wants his father to talk to his teacher Birnbaum. But Biff first hears the laughter of the woman inside and sees her coming out of the bathroom, half-dressed. Biff is shocked to see her with his father. He does not believe the bluffs of his father that she is a buyer. He weeps to his father "You gave her mama's steaking". Then at one stroke Biff has matured and says that his master will not listen to his father's request. His father's character had fallen in his image. He refuses his father's offer of driving back with him and goes away in anger and sorrow, calling his father 'a liar and a fake'.

The memory scene is over and Stanley enters to indicate that they are still in the restaurant and Willy is shouting at the Shorelow of his memory. Meanwhile Biff had gone away unable to bear his father anger. Happy also had gone off with the call girl, saying to her, He is not my father, "he is just agony". Now we see Willy alone in the restaurant when we come back to the present from his part memories. Stanley helps him to calm down and Willy hears straight at a seed store with this Willy has reached the limits of his endurance. First he has lost his job, and then has known about Biff's failure. Over all this he stands rejected by his son. Now he turns to planting seeds for soothing his mind. His desire for greeny has always remained a means of escape into a romantic imaginative world from the realistic troublesome life of the present. He has a growing fear that he may die without achieving his ideals and thus the planting symbolises an urgency to do something before he dies. That is why he leaves in a Lucy saying, "nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground".

Stanley the waiter removes the table and chairs, indicating change of scene. Again Willy in the back in the present; The day starts with a night scene, in which

Willy comes home, and it ends also in night scene of the next day. In the meantime only twenty four years of present time have elapsed but with that has gone full life span of Willy.

Willy has come home and is busy planting seeds in the backyard, unmindful of the dark night. Linda already known of the happy at the restaurant. She is furious when the boy enters with the branch of flower fortes. She shows them sway and shows at them to get out that way minute. "I don't want you tormenting him any more", You're a pair of animals, and had the curely to walk out on that man in a restaurant, she says bitterly, while Happy goes up without causing much for his mother's outburst, Biff feels sorry and is full of self-loathing, he however wants to have a frank talk with Willy before leaving. He finds Willy in the backyard carrying a hoe, a flash light and seed. He is also talking to an imaginary Ben. It is evident that he has decided to kill himself for getting his twenty thousand dollar insurance money. He is very much concerned about Linda and repeats many times "The woman has suffered". He argues the Pros and cons of a suicide, and whether his policy will be honoured or not. He ever imagines that his funeral will be well attended, because he is well-known and well-liked by all in the business world in Phode Island, New York, New Jersey, everywhere. At the same time he is afraid that his son should not think him a coward. That becomes all the mere reason that he should give the boy a parting gift of big money. So that he may not hate his father.

Ben drifts away and Biff comes on the scene. Biff tries to explain, but Willy does not listen to him. He goes in heart broken when Biff, says good-bye to him. He goes inside and does not answer properly to Linda's enquiries. Willy still wants Biff to meet Oliver the next day, but Biff no longer wants them to live in the world of false illusion. Willy refuses to even shake hands with Biff before he leaves. He orders him not to leave his house, but Biff does not oblige. Instead of a frank and compromising talk quarrel ensure, Biff is him outburst becomes emotional takes out the small length of tube which he had found behind the gas heater, he exposes Willy suicidal plan before all and asks him. "If this will make you a hero". He breaks down and cries. He says the truth about himself that the stole a suit in Kansas City and was

in jail for the three month. In fact he stole himself out of every good job since high school. He blames Willy only for teaching him such behaviour.

In his opinion everyone in the Loman family is "a clime a dozen" but they thieve an lines. It is better they wake up to this reality sooner, Milfedl thus emphasises the attitude of the commonman, in the face of no great or extra-ordinary success. Biff breaks down and embraces his father and cries his woes on his shoulders. Suddenly Willy Loman realises that his son still loves him and he is not rejected by him. A strange calm envelopes him and Willy who has been raving mad throughout the play becomes calm and sensible. He decides to kill himself that moment as he wants to give a great parting gift to his loving son "That boy is going to be magnificent with twenty thousand dollars behind him," he says and Ben also approves his plan, by saying "The jungle is dark, but full of diamonds". He sends Linda to bed, assuring her that he will come up to sleep after sitting alone for a few minutes.

Linda goes into the living room and then reappears in her bedroom. Willy moves outside the kingdom door, talking with an imaginary Ben. Ben hurries him saying that they will be late, for the boat is about to leave. Linda keeps calling to him to come to bed. He turns around and sees a bost of sounds, voices, screams and faces. He silences them with a word 'sh' and rushes out of the house.

Linda gets no answer to her call. She hears the sound of a car starting and moving away at full speed and guesses the worst by exclaiming "No!". Biff rushes down the stairs shouting 'pop'. Everyone knows what has happened the stage is slowly filled with people. Charley and Bernard, Biff and happy, and Linda all dressed somberly for mourning and carrying flowers to the grave.

The story of Willy Loman ends here, but the play continues and the third Act presents the scene of a 'requiem'.

Death, by suicide, is the central idea of this tragedy and gives the character of Loman, a great dimension, which he may not have otherwise achieved. Miller explores this theatrical necessity with great intensity of feeling.

8.7 Requiem

The story of Willy Loman ends with his suicide in the second Act. But Miller continues the play to present a brief 'Requiem' which serves as a sort of epilogue to this tragedy.

In this scene we find the Loman family and Charley paying homage to the departed soul at Willy's grave. Linda is full of remorse and cannot understand why Willy chose this drastic step. Biff still blames Willy for having the wrong dreams, though he is able appreciate how wonderful he has with his hands, working on the ceiling porch or on the extra bathroom and garage he put up. Charley defends Willy saying that a lonely salesman always on four and away from the home, has got to dream, if he has to keep his morale high.

Contrary to Willy's expectation, no from his business associated attend the funeral. It is purely a family affair and this emphasises again the fact that the didn't society discards anyone when he becomes super flowers and useless. Biff is firm in his opinion of his father, that he didn't know who he was or what he wanted. However this does not lessen his affection for him. But now we see happy a changed character. When Biff wants him to go him to the tent, he replies that he will continue his struggle here at home, and show to the world one day that Willy Loman has not died in vain. His dream was to become number one man and Happy will continue to fight it out here to real this dream of his father. Even after everyone has left, Linda says on at the grave and talks to Willy. She has made the fast payment on the house and they are free and clear now. But ironically no one is there to stay with her in the house. Biff slowly lifts her and takes her out of the stage comfortingly. Just as in the beginning only the music of the flute envelopes the audience when the stage lights darken over the skyline of high rise building of New York.

Here we also notice that Willy is funeral is in marked contrast with the one he describes earlier that of Dave singleman. This also present a criticism on contemporary American society, which measures man is worth only by his material wealth, success, and social position, and not by his inherent dignity, moral capacity

and sense of commitment. By American standards Willy Loman is a small man but by Miller's standards he is great here.

Requiem serves still another purpose. It concludes the sound and fury of Willy's life of a note of silence as all the accusation and justification die down with his death. All the major characters are assembled together on the stage and each one eulogies and analyses Willy Loman's character and behaviour. Linda cannot understand his final exit. Happy becomes another Willy in his decision to continue to work to realise his father's dreams. Only Biff repeats twice "The man didn't know who he was and strikes the basic philosophical chord in the play.

For the tragedy of Willy Loman, he himself is greatly to be blamed for dreaming beyond his small 'realm'. But Miller emphatically says that along with him contemporary American society is also partly to be blamed as it recognises only material wealth as the success and sacrifice 'small men' like Willy Loman in their great 'rat race'.

8.8 Character Sketches

8.8.1 Willy Loman

Willy Loman is a common man, caught up in the false values of middle class American society of the twentieth century. By making an ordinary "little man the hero of a powerful tragedy of the modern time", Miller sets a new trend in the choice of his subjects and introduces a new "little man hero" theory which later caught up the imagination of the playwrights and the audience. He is so typical that he can be anybody and everybody.

Willy's father was a man with a big beard who made his living selling flutes made with his own hands. He travelled with his family in a wagon, a sort of travelling salesman that Willy was to become later on Willy's romantic love for greenery and pastoral life is probably inherited from his wander-lust father. However when Willy was less than four years old, his father just disappeared seeking wealth in far-off Alaska. His elder brother aged seventeen also followed suit leaving Willy with his

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4. Willy's father disappeared in _____

mother. Soon he became an orphan child with the death of his mother, and was left to fend for himself. This characteristic of restless wandering, Willy has inherited from his father and passed on to his son Biff, who also prefers the green earth and the blue skies to the concrete jungles of New York City. The insecure childhood of Willy helps us to understand his character and its frailties better.

Willy has two simple ambitions in life, one to become successful and rich in the business world, and the second to be loved by his sons. But throughout his life, he remains poor and indebted. "I'm always in a race with the junkyard" he says, when one thing for ever recalling his missed chances and talking to an imaginary Ben, who has gone into the jungle at the age of 17 and walked out at 21, very rich, possessing, diamonds. If only Linda, has not prevented him from going when also become another Ben.

What he failed to become, he wanted and hoped his sons to achieve. But again he is disappointed as both Biff and Happy are lazy-do-nothings. Biff is unable to 'hold a job' a settle down even at the age of thirty four. To escape the harsh reality of unpaid bills, the loneliness caused by his sons living away from him, and his disappointment with them, he often goes back in time and reminisces about happier days, when his sons, as school boys, stayed with him and loved and admired him.

Willy is a man of many illusions which he keeps mixing up with reality. He has an innocent faith in the goodness of people, but this is shattered by Howard, his boss, when he sacks Willy heartlessly on finding him aged and useless. Then Willy learns his first lesson in the selfish harsh business world. He loves his sons so much that he has no harsh word for them even when Biff steals. In fact he brings them up on the false idea that success depends more on personal appearance and likeability rather than on inner worth and capacity. Thus the very foundations of his and his son's lives are laid on shaky and false grounds.

As the play starts, he has already had his hopes and disappointments. He is over sixty, tired of working hard for a life time as a travelling salesman, without making a mark or money. His dreams of success and money are still far away. He is

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5. How old is
Willy?

physically spent and mentally on the verge of a collapse. He is considered a raving and shouting loony even by his sons. The only person who sympathises and stands by his side is his wife Linda. She tries by all means to get him out of his collapse and inevitable end. He is always carrying on a conversation with imaginary and dead persons relevant only to himself. He has tried suicide once, but has escaped death. He keeps ready a length of rubber tube handy behind the gas heater to commit suicide again anytime.

On the last day of his life, we find him lonely, desperate, deluded and disappointed with himself and his sons. But still he lives on false values and does not accept the real worth of his sons, he comes home losing his job and rejected by his sons. He turns to planting seeds which again is another of his obsession - love for the green rural scene.

He has many flaws, but, his plus point is, he is essentially a family man, devoted to family loyalties. Even his short affair with the other woman in Boston can be excused. He loves his wife dearly and repeats again and again "The woman has suffered". Once he knows that she is still loved by his son Biff in spite of their eternal quarrels, he wants to give him a parting gift of twenty thousand dollars, which he can raise only from insurance only by killing himself.

For Willy, death is the only alternative to greatness. He will not be 'little' and 'low' to die, as he dies. Selling himself for the sake of his family, is to reach out in a last chance for magnificence. This may not be sensible in the eyes of the world. In his sacrifice, all accusations, about his flaws are silenced.

As a salesman, no doubt, he is 'little' in status and profession. But he refuses to surrender his vision of himself or his expectations of his sons, and it is their fanaticism that endows him with a mighty stature, fit for a tragic hero.

8.8.2 Linda

Linda, the wife of Willy Loman, emerges as a strong character than Willy. She has all the good qualities one can find in a woman-care, love, courage, strength of

mind and above all humanity. In fact Willy and Linda live in the same materialistic American society, face the same financial problems, disappointment with their children and the loneliness caused by the sons leaving the house etc. But whereas we find Willy on the verge of a mentally collapse when he is aged, we find Linda emerging stronger like a rock from all these difficulties and in fact standing as a strong pillar supporting her husband so never has a harsh word for him. Even when she knows that Willy is living on delusions and self-deception. She never speaks strong words like Biff or even mildly like Charley and ask him to wake up to realities.

Charley very often says to Willy "O Willy when are you going to grow up". She also knows that Willy hopes are based on immaturity. She is contrast to them in maturity and knows and accepts her husband and sons as they are with all their flaws. She must have known Willy infidelity at Boston, but has excused him and forgotten it as a passing phase and need of a lonely travelling salesman.

In fact she loves him so much that, when she learns that their sons have left him abruptly in a restaurant to go with call girls, she shouts at them to leave the house at once. "I don't want you tormenting him anymore in his own house". She shouts at them and orders them to leave.

She has been all along a mediator between the father and sons. She tries to patch up the differences between them so gently that the boys themselves admire her loyalty and devotion. Happy and Biff love and admire their mother so much that Happy says "They broke the mould after they made her". He is not able to meet any other girl who is as nice, loving and chaste as her, that she remains unmarried even at the age of thirty four. She is a mother not only to Happy and Biff but also to Willy. All the three especially Willy are totally dependent on her for emotional support.

In fact this 'mother image' of Linda has been a point of criticism. She does not help Willy to wake up to realities, but plays the game of illusions along with him. She also is a firm believer in the 'bird in the hand' policy of stability at home. That is why she makes the mistake of preventing Willy from going to Alaska when Ben offers to take him. Willy has only this grudge against her. Otherwise he loves her and

knows her devotion to him. That is why he repeats several times "The woman has suffered", before he decides to take the final step to get the insurance money for the family.

Miller makes Linda his mouthpiece in many places where he wants to present Willy as a "victim" of the materialistic society of America of the twentieth century. Her most famous speech is that "Willy is a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He is not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog". This is in fact the message of the play which Miller wants to convey.

Linda plays a positive role throughout to sustain Willy's life. She makes all efforts possible to save him from mental collapse and suicide. But she fails ultimately and cries her heart out in the Requiem, unable to understand why Willy has taken this drastic step.

However there is also this criticism, that her character not adequate. She says finally in the 'Requiem' that she could not understand why Willy had committed suicide. She knows of his earlier attempts. Still she cries why he did this. She is short-sighted and is not understanding enough. The great sacrifice that Willy had done for their sake goes unnoticed and unrecognised by her. This is a flaw in her otherwise noble character.

8.8.3 Biff

The story of the play *Death of a Salesman* revolves round the relationship between a father Willy Loman and his two sons Biff and Happy. Critics compare this relationship to the relationship of the Biblical characters Adam and his sons Cain and Abel. Thus the characters achieve tragic and mythical dimensions.

Biff is the son of Willy Loman, a travelling salesman. Indeed he is his favourite son and represent his ambitions and hope. As a student and adolescent Biff has been a bright and cheerful boy, who loved his mother and admired his father. In fact he has been brought up on the wrong notion that in modern American society and

business world, one's physical charm and appearance and capacity to be popular and being well-liked by all count more than one's real worth, integrity and his capacity for hard work. Fed on these wrong notions of success by his loving father, he becomes a pampered child in his school days. He is never studious and concentrates more on athletics and baseball than on Maths. The two boys are encouraged by their father to pilfer and he becomes a habitual and purposeless thief. He loses and learns of his father's friendship with another woman in Boston. He leaves home and tries his hand at several jobs, but never gets settled in any even at the age of thirty four. He comes home when he is homesick, only to pick up a quarrel with his father and leave again. He shatters the hope and ambitions of his father by proving himself a misfit.

He has wanderlust and a love for the blue skies, green woods and the open yards. He has worked in a ranch and love the horses and colts which remind him of his home and make him feel homesick. These characteristics are inherited from his father, Willy, who also has the wanderlust and loves the countryside more than the city of New York, and has a restless spirit. Biff's stealing habit also continues and lands him in jail for three months. Even when he goes to meet Oliver to ask for a loan he steals his fountain pen. May be this is a psychological problem and he does this to spite his father, who has ruined his life by teaching him wrong values in life. Here Miller criticises and satirises the typical American, Athletic young man hero image represented by the character of Biff.

But Biff is not without his redeeming qualities. He loves his father in spite of his "Spite" or grudge against him, and also in spite of the fact that the blames his father for bringing him up on false values. His final reconciliation at the end is the evidence of the fact that he has overcome his psychological 'shock' that his own failure is the failure of Willy's commercial values. This declaration of his love for his father, makes Willy mellow and come back to his senses and makes him voluntarily sacrifice his life to give a parting gift to his son.

However in his self-realization Biff differs from Willy. Whereas Willy is ever in an illusory dream word of instant success, refusing to wake up to the realities of life, Biff is ever aware and conscious of their failures and capabilities. He tries to

wake up his father also by declaring "I am a dime a dozen pop and so are you, we never told the truth for ten minutes in this house".

Here Biff becomes the spokesman of Miller in driving home the message of the play, that self-deceit and showmanship are the ruin of the family. When the play ends Biff is again ready to move. Only Happy decides to stay and use Willy's money to realise Willy's dream. Now of course Biff has cast off his illusions and has no false self-image. He is ready to accept and enjoy whatever life has to offer to him.

Paradoxically, being ordinary, and knowing that he is ordinary, and his readiness to accept reality and life as it is, is what makes him special. This gives him a new and special identity.

8.8.4 Happy

Compared to Biff, Happy is a supporting character and plays a minor role. The father son relationship is stronger between Willy and Biff than Willy and Happy. The love between Willy and Biff is the deepest and most anguished.

In character or in career, Happy is no better than Biff while Biff goes away to the west in search of pastoral peace. Happy is content with New York, where he earns enough to rent an apartment and spend for his affairs with call girls. Biff represents Willy's dream of success in business in a city both fail to make a mark, and live away from the father. But Willy takes to heart Biff's failure more than Happy's failure. Somehow he is able to accept Happy, as he is, but becomes brokenhearted when he thinks of Biff. Till the very last he pins his hopes on Biff. Once Biff makes it clear that it will never come true, he wants to give a final gift of insurance money, by killing himself.

Happy remains cool and aloof from the family, cares very little for his parents and calls his father a lonely loony. In the restaurant he forgets his father and the situation and walks away with his girl. He refuses to own his father to the girl and insists that they go out without even informing Willy. While leaving he says "no, he's not my father, he's just a guy". But at the end, he rises to the occasion. While Biff is

ready to leave once again after the Requiem, it is Happy who decides to stay with his mother and try to realise Willy's dream of success.

He loves his mother more than his father, she is a symbol of ideal womanhood, rare to be found in modern American society. He declares that "they broke the mould after they made her" and, he is not able to marry and settle down. Miller voices some of his criticism about modern American woman through the character of Happy.

Happy is portrayed as a shallow and vain playboy in the beginning, but at the end shows signs of possible salvation, after realising the sacrifice, his father had made, for the sake of his sons.

8.9 As a modern tragedy

A perfect definition of "a tragedy is almost impossible. On the one hand any story with a sad ending is called a tragedy. On the other hand no modern play is accepted as a tragedy, as the hero is not of exalted rank, as per Greek and Shakespearean standards. But Arthur Miller, himself gives a definition of a modern tragedy, and has tried to abide by his formula, in his plays.

In Greek tragedies, man is presented as the victim of powerful forces, which are beyond his "ken" (i.e.) the inevitable and all powerful fate. They emphasised the fact that even powerful kings, and rich nobles could not escape its clutches. That is why the heroes were always of high rank. But in the modern age, with changes in life style and scientific advances, writers became preoccupied with social, political and economic abuses of the modern age.

This concern with social problem, the social injustice and its effect on the lives of the character, is found in Miller's play *Death of a Salesman* also. Thus he presents a theory that, the common man is more suitable as the tragic hero, than kings and queens of olden days. In this play, Willy Loman, an ordinary unsuccessful salesman, is presented as crushed by forces outside himself and his own resultant illusions and false ideals i.e., man as a victim of his surroundings. Miller himself

writes, that the tragic feeling in Willy Loman's life, is evoked by the fact that "he is ready to lay down his life, to secure his personal dignity". Willy Loman need not belong to a high rank in society, but his readiness to sacrifice his all, secures him the rightful place in life.

Again another must for the earlier tragedies is the "tragic flaw"; a flaw in the hero's character which brings about his downfall. Willy Loman satisfies this condition. He is seen primarily as the victim of the society, which thinks that "a failure in society and business has no right to live". But he is also seen as a victim of his warped views, his illusions about the real worth of himself and his children, a sort of self-deception. Even when Biff tries to wake him up to realities at the end by saying "I am a dime a dozen, pop, so are you", he retorts and refuses to acknowledge this truth and says "no, I'm not a dime a dozen; I'm Willy-Loman", and does not want to wake up to reality. When he realises that Biff still loves him, he goes to his death, still clinging to his illusions. Thus he becomes a pathetic figure and a great tragic hero.

Miller tries to say that the common man may also attain heroic stature, and the tragic effect stems from the hero's struggle against the conventions, Persons and institutions ranged against him. Through the character of Willy Loman, he conveys the message that our man-made ethical system is faulty and should be improved. Through the tragedy of Willy Loman, he evokes feelings in the hearts of the viewers, for the greater tragedy of modern society and modern life.

Again this play fulfils another condition that tragedy should elevate man, by touching on his finer sensibilities and perceptions. The function of Miller's play is to reveal the truth concerning our society which frustrates and denies man, his personal dignity. The play deals with a relevant social problem, and makes the audience leave the theatre with a heavy heart, questioning and contemplating on the very basis of the system. This is the essence of Miller's tragedy, which refers to "please" us by arousing our awareness.

Willy Loman may have been a fool compared to the practical commonsense of the successful Charley. But no one, can write a great tragedy about Charley.

8.10 "Death of a Salesman" as a new experiment in form and content

The most important single fact about this play of Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, is that he has brought back into the modern theatre, the grandeur of Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, once again, with its depth and character analysis. We can safely say that he had made a new experiment in theatre, by the fusion of the realism and expressionism. It is both realistic and non-realistic-realistic in content non realistic in form.

The theme of *Death of Salesman* is very much realistic, in the sense that the hero, Willy Loman, is an ordinary man, so real, that he could be anybody and everybody. His problems are our problems. They are universal, not limited to twentieth century American society alone. He deals with his problems, not from his personal level, but as a sociological problem (i.e.) the relationship of the individual to the society. This is what the critics called social realism, which is the theme of Miller's play. Willy Loman represents the common man, presented as a victim of the 'rat race' which is fast devouring American society, in search of materialistic success. He is seen as crushed by forces outside himself and by his own resultant illusions and false ideals.

The materialistic environment, which considers an unsuccessful man, as unfit to live, is described rather as the villain who destroys Willy Loman. It is presented as the shaping force of man, and the basis for the changing of eternal and traditional values of life. Thus we can say the theme is very much realistic.

The Form and Treatment

In the form and treatment, the play sets a new trend. A new technique, what is called "the stream of consciousness" in the novel, or "Symbolism or expressionism" in style, is successfully used here to depict the internal commotion of the main character.

Actually the events of the story cover only one day (i.e.,) the last twenty four hours of Willy Loman's life. But along with each present event depicted on the stage, we also see simultaneous projections of Willy's memory into the past events, which are connected and significant to the present. These cannot be described as mere "flash backs" as we see in today's films. The events of the past in "flash back," happen within the consciousness of Willy. Sometimes more than one memory project themselves at the same time with the result, we get the effect of multiple actions, or one action super-imposed on another. As the events happen in the memory of Willy Loman, there is no regard for chronology or time sequence. This is called Ibsen's retrospective method. It is a thematic forcing of the past into the present-the method of showing first an ordinary domestic scene into which by gradual infiltration the failure, the weakness, the father-son relationship, all enter and build up to the final crisis of Willy's suicide.

The expressionist idea, is only too evident Willy Loman is not any individual, but symbolises a whole lot of salesmen, who are average and less than average, and unable to cope with the 'rat-race- of modern society. The man has passed from selling things to selling himself. The society symbolically has sold and discarded old and eternal values. The hero fails, because he tries to follow his own special codes of social morality. Miller is always obsessed with the idea of social morality. His aim has always been to present "man as a creature of society and at the same time as its creator".

Miller had earlier thought of giving this play another title "The inside of his head", but later changed to "Death of a Salesman". He has also given a subtitle "Certain private conversation, in Two Acts and a Requiem". Miller thus treats his subjects also as a study in psychological aspects of human behaviour under stress. Therefore he needs a new approach and technique in his dramatic presentation.

Miller gives elaborate stage directions. The setting is obviously non- realistic. The use of soft music, flute playing melody, which is small, fine and telling of grass, trees and horizon in the opening scene, the use of light effects-the foreground area is

in sky blue light, whereas the background is in orange light etc., indicate that Miller is trying hard to be non-realistic, to create an air of "dream" to the place.

The set is also "transparent", in the sense that there are no barriers or walls, dividing the different parts of the house. Only the effective use of light makes it clear to the audience whether the action is taking place in Willy's bedroom or kitchen or in the boy's room or outside in the garden. Only the light and furniture shift from the hall to the kitchen, and the rest of the stage goes dark, indicating a change of scene. Also persons in one area are not supposed to know or hear what goes on in the other parts of the house. The audience watch two or three scenes at the same time. The simple technique gives tremendous scope to the modern playwright. "Death of a Salesman" won the 'Pulitzer Prize' and boosted Miller's reputation.

Miller has given a new form and substance to American theatre. In 1964, the Lincoln Repertory Theatre, made special modifications in the stage to suit the needs of the new dramatist. It is a play with a realistic theme, portrayed in "expressionist" scenes.

8.11 Failure of Willy Loman: An Analysis

"Death of a Salesman" is hailed by critics as a modern classic. Here Miller, as in his earlier play, "All my sons," is concerned with the theme of man being the victim of the evils of a commercial society.

The theme is very much real in the sense that Willy Loman is an ordinary Salesman, trying and working his best even at the age of sixty, to be successful and rich. He is so real that you can call him Mr. Everyman. His problems are our problems.

Miller deals with Loman's failure as a sociological problem (i.e.,) from the angle of the relationship between the individual and the society. Willy Loman represents the common man, who is unsuccessful in the 'rat race' of the materialistic society towards prosperity.

Check Your Progress

6. Willy Loman's failure is dealt as a _____ problem.

The materialistic American environment, according to the Miller, considers an unsuccessful man, as unfit to live. Man is valued by the success and the riches he possesses and not by his inner worth, sublime character, or lofty human ideals. Wealth is thus the shaping force of man, and the basis for the changing of eternal and traditional values. There is a new "social morality", which is accepted in the society in which success by any means, even by unfair means equated with morality, and nobility of character. According to the new standards of this social morality, Willy Loman, who is unable to become either successful in his trade or rich, is a failure.

Miller is keen to show that the failure of Willy Loman is to the commercial environment, and the new type of social morality, of the commercial age. However, this alone is not the cause of Loman's failure. He has also humanized the character of Loman in detail and depth. Miller also stresses the point, that although in many respects that man is the victim of the society, he himself is a weak individual and partially responsible for his fate.

Willy has two ambitions in life, to become a successful salesman like Dave singleman and be rich, and to see his sons become successful and rich, and achieving great things in life. Unfortunately, both do not happen. He earns only just enough to make both ends meet and is always running into debts. His two sons Biff, and Happy on whom he had pinned high hopes, are also utter failures. Even at the age of thirty four, Biff is yet to get settled in life and is trying his hand at various odd jobs in the West. Happy earns just something in the city, and squanders all that on wine and women. Both don't live with Loman and don't support their parents in their old age. Willy Loman and Linda live alone and away from their sons, and this loneliness also drives Willy crazy first and later to his suicide.

But as Biff says in the final scene, they are not to be blamed for this. Willy has been always living on false values and illusions and self deception. He has brought up his sons teaching them ideas that success will come automatically their way, without any effort on their part, as they are both handsome and have likeable personalities. Happy says "we are never brought up to grub for money", meaning they were never taught either to be hardworking and studious like Bernard, or tricky and

adventurous, like Ben. Two things could have brought them success, hard work and unfair means, and the law of the jungle. Knowing neither, Willy was a failure and made his sons also failures. But Biff knows that and says "I'm a dime a dozen and so you are", but Willy goes to his grave clinging to his old values of family loyalty on the one side, and self deceptive illusions on the other hand. He becomes successful and rich, ironically, only in his death by suicide, when he sells himself for insurance money.

He may be a total failure in society. But by sacrificing himself, he gains personal dignity and nobility.

8.12 Summing Up

Miller's most significant contribution to the American literature is his optimistic moral concern. There is a basic health in his plays. The structure of *Death of a Salesman* dramatizes the failure of the American dream of success, by depicting the past and present failures of the salesman. This play is technically intricate and complex. The structure of the play is a fine blend of naturalism and expressionism and the result is an extremely powerful and highly personal form.

8.13 Answers to CYP Questions

- | | | |
|------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| 1. Use of light and darkness | 2. Oliver | 3. Biff |
| 4. Alaska | 5. over 60 | 6. sociological |

8.14 Questions

1. Examine *Death of a Salesman* as a modern tragedy.
2. Comment on the technique of *Death of a Salesman*.
3. Write an essay on the American dream as presented in *Death of a Salesman*.

8.15 For Further Reading

1. Hayman, Ronald. *Arthur Miller*, Unger 1972.

2. Hogan, R.G. *Arthur Miller*, University of Minnesota Press, 1964.

3. Huftel, S. *Arthur Miller, The Burning Glass*, London. W.H.Allen, 1965.

THE SCARLET LETTER

-Nathaniel Hawthorne

9.1 Introduction

Nathaniel Hawthorne's art reached its height of excellence with *The Scarlet Letter*. *The Scarlet Letter* is a piece of originality. It tells the strange story of the steadfast loyalty of a disloyal woman Hester Prynne. She remains faithful to her lover Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale through seven years of hardship social ostracism and isolation. The act of adultery had already been committed long before the beginning of the story. Hawthorne is constantly engaged in developing the themes of this novel and in filling up various scenes, characters and sources for the purpose of their induction into it. The themes are the theme of damnation, the theme of frustration and guilt, the theme of sin and regeneration, the theme of crime and punishment and the theme of passion or love.

9.2 Unit Objectives

- Hawthorne's masterly skill in handling the symbols
- His conception of setting

9.3 Unit Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Unit Objectives
- 9.3 Unit Structure
- 9.4 Life and works
- 9.5 An outline story
- 9.6 Chapterwise Summary
- 9.7 Hester Prynne on the scaffold in the market place
- 9.8 Hester's life after release from prison

9.9 Arthur Dimmesdale's Vigil on the Scaffold

9.10 The Death of Dimmesdale

9.11 Character sketches

9.12 Summation

9.13 Answers to CYP Questions

9.14 Questions

9.15 For Further Reading

9.4 Life and works

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born on July 4, 1804, in Salem, Massachusetts. His forefathers were stern Puritans who took delight in persecuting whoever deviated from the established moral code. After his father's death in 1808, the boy Hawthorne was brought up by his uncle. He began his career by writing short stories which were published in three volumes, *Twice Told Tales* (1837), *Mosses from an old Manse* (1846) and *The Snow Image* (1852). He married a New England blue stocking, Min Sophia Peabody. He joined a socialistic experiment in community living at Brook farm where eminent Transcendentalists like Margaret Fuller, Henry Thoreau and Emerson gathered. The experiment proved unsuccessful but inspired Hawthorne's novel *The Blithedale Romance*. His job as a surveyor in the Salem custom House led him to write the anti-puritan novel, *The Scarlet Letter* which brought him a lot of money and paved the way for some financial independence. *The House of Seven Gables* depicted some abnormal, stunted people. His European tour and spending some years in Rome and Florence resulted in his last full length, 'romance'. *The Marble Pawn*. He died on 19 May, 1864, leaving behind four incomplete novels, *Dr. Grimshaw's Secret*, *Septimius Felton*, *The Dolliver Romance* and *The Ancestral Footstep*. After his death, rich tributes were paid him by such eminent writers as Henry James and T.S. Eliot.

9.5 An outline story of *The Scarlet Letter*

The story unfolds in the city of Boston early in the 18th century. The city is surrounded by a thick forest inhabited by the native Red Indians. One morning Hester

Check Your Progress

1. _____ is the anti-puritan novel that Hawthorne has written.

Prynne, bearing her three-month-old baby is brought out of prison and made to stand on the scaffold where usually law-breakers are stood and made fun of by the general public. Hester's offence is that, having separated from her husband, she had committed adultery and the letter A, denoting her adultery, is embroidered on her bodice. In the market place where she stands and is stared at she sees her husband Roger Chillingworth an old, deformed man. They do not, however, talk to each other. As Hester refuses to identify her illicit lover, she is sent back to prison. Chillingworth cannot pay the ransom demanded by his Red Indian captor. So he is also sent to the same prison. Both Hester and her child are unwell. Hester refuses to reveal the identity of her lover to Chillingworth also. But he swears that he will find out the truth soon. He asks Hester not to reveal to anybody that this is her husband. She agrees to do so.

The period of imprisonment is over. Both Hester and Chillingworth are released. Hester resides in an old cottage on the outskirts of Boston. Chillingworth attends on the clergyman Arthur Dimmesdale who is growing weaker and weaker. Pearl, now three years old, is very naughty. It is felt that the immoral Hester is unfit to rear Pearl and that therefore, Pearl should be separated from her mother and entrusted to some other capable person. Dimmesdale pleads on behalf of Hester and so the status quo is maintained.

Dimmesdale is Hester's illicit lover. Chillingworth suspects but is made to feel very guilty by Chillingworth, Dimmesdale is so very guilt-ridden that, one night, he stands on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl by his side. By this act Dimmesdale wants to confess his sin publicly. But, as it is midnight, nobody notices him. Chillingworth knows that Dimmesdale has been prompted by his guilty conscience. But, pretending that Dimmesdale has stood on the scaffold in a fit of somnambulism Chillingworth gently takes him back home.

To protect Dimmesdale from the harmful Chillingworth, Hester meets him in the forest and reveals to him that Chillingworth is her husband. The lovers decide to escape to England on board a Bristol-bound ship. Chillingworth finds out their secret plan and arranges to accompany them on the same ship. The lover's plan is shattered;

Dimmesdale realizes that the best way of reaching safety is not to run away from Boston but to confess his guilt to the public. So, after delivering the inspiring election sermon, Dimmesdale stands on the scaffold with Hester and Pearl for the second time, to the surprise and shock of all the spectators. He forgives Chillingworth. Baring his chest and showing the letters 'A' mysteriously inscribed on his chest, Dimmesdale sinks down dead. Within a year, Chillingworth, stung by his conscience, grows very weak and dies. Pearl grows up, gets married and settles down in England. Hester lives in her old cottage, bearing the letter A on her dress. The letter 'A' marks not the scorn but the reverence of the Bostonians towards her.

9.6 Chapter - wise summary of the novel

1. The prison - door:

The first chapter describes the gloomy front of a prison which the forefathers of Boston had built in the vicinity of cornhill. The rusty iron spikes of the prison door give the building is a wild rose-bush with delicate gem-like flowers. It looks as though, though the flowers, Nature expresses its sympathy for the prisoners. The author supposes that these flowers must have spring up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson as he entered the prison. He considers the flower a symbol of the sweet moral of the tragic story he is going to narrate.

The market - place :

It is morning the month of June not less than two centuries ago. A large number of the male and female inhabitants of Boston are standing in front of the prison to see Hester Prynne, accused of adultery, emerge from the prison. She has the letter A' flamboyantly embroidered on the front part of her gown. The letter betokens the adultery which she is supposed to have committed and of which the infant she is carrying is a visible proof. All stare at her as she stands unmoved on the scaffold in the market-place. Though she is regarded as a sinner by all, the author associated her with the immaculate Mary carrying the infant Christ born to redeem mankind. Standing on the platform, Hester broods upon her past association with a misshapen scholar in a continental city.

Check Your Progress

2. Who carries the embroidered letter 'A' on the front part of her gown?

The Recognition :

While standing on the scaffold, Hester suddenly notices a Red Indian and a white man with a slight deformity. Seeing that Hester has noticed him, the white man rises his finger, makes a gesture with it in the air and lays it on his lips. He learns from a bystander that Hester's husband, a learned man, English by birth, decided to settle with her in Boston. As he had some work to attend to in Amsterdam, he stayed back there and sent his wife alone to Massachusetts, intending to join her later. But even after two years, he did not come and his wife gave birth to a baby in his absence, that baby she is holding in her arms now. The magistrates treated her very sympathetically, not giving her the death sentence she merits for her lapse but merely asking her to stand at the scaffold for three hours. Moreover, the magistrates also gave her a chance to confess publicly who was responsible for her fall, so that the punishment inflicted on her can be withdrawn. But Hester has refused to betray her lover. Hester is panic stricken on identifying the white man as her former husband.

In the meantime, both Governor Bellingham and the Reverend John Wilson persuade the Reverend Dimmesdale to make Hester confess. In a tremulous voice Dimmesdale asks Hester to name her partner, however highly placed, should stand voluntarily by conscience. Hester says firmly that she will never confess and is led back to prison.

The Interview :

Hester is solely agitated because she cannot reveal his husband, the white man, whom she saw at the market place or her lover, the Reverend Dimmesdale who addressed her from the balcony. Her baby, drinking her milk, contracts her mental restlessness and keeps crying in feverish sleeplessness. The jailer master Brackett brings a skilled physician to treat the mother and the child. In this chapter we learn that his name is Roger Chillingworth.

Roger Chillingworth gives a soothing medicine to the child and enables it to sleep peacefully. Next, he gives Hester a recipe which she drinks reluctantly. Chillingworth says that he, old and decayed, should not have married her. He also

says that he knew even at the time of marrying her that she would not be chaste. Hester replies that she never loved him or feigned, to love him. Even at the outset, she frankly admitted her inability to love him even though he was a scholar of great worth. Thus both Hester and Chillingworth admit their failings.

Next, Chillingworth asks Hester to name her paramour, which she firmly refuses to do. He swears to trace her secret lover soon. However, he promises her that he will never do any harm to her lover. Finally, he extracts a promise from Hester not to reveal to anybody that he is her husband.

Hester at her needle :

Occupying a lonely cottage on the outskirts of the village, Hester supports herself and her child by embroidering the clothing of bigwigs such as the Governor, ministers and military men. Occasionally she embroiders the shrouds of dead bodies. She uses the major part of her income to make coarse garments for the poor but they ungratefully revile her. But when she walks alone, ministers wilyly jeer at her and women cast envious glances at her, wishing to enjoy the kind of illicit pleasure that she has enjoyed. The shocking realization dawns on Hester that, under the guise of purity all are simmering with immoral impulses.

Pearl :

Hester calls her child Pearl as she regards it as valuable as the pearl. She thinks that her daughter is fit to be brought up in Eden, as the plaything of angels. As the child grows up, it becomes unruly. It seems to have inherited her mother's passionate nature. Other children are not prepared to play with Pearl. She grows up in a hostile atmosphere and shows her enmity to the inanimate objects around her. She treats pine trees as puritans and whips them. One day she throws flowers at the red badge on her mother's bosom and says fiendishly that it was not sent by God. Hester is reminded of the puritans pointing to her child as a demon offspring.

Check Your Progress

3. What is the name of Hester's child?

The Governor's hall :

Fearing that Pearl may be separated from her supposing her unfit to rear the child along Christian lines, Hester goes to meet Governor Bellingham in his hall. Tripping and tumbling Pearl also accompanies her. On seeing a gang of puritan children threatening to sling mud on her, Pearl shouts at them and drives them away. In the Governor's garden, the child sees some important people coming and stops crying for a red rose.

The elf-child and the minister:

Governor Bellingham, Reverend John Wilson, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth are seen coming. Dimmesdale is weak and emaciated probably because of his excessive devotion to his pastoral duties. Governor Bellingham asks Wilson to examine Pearl's Christian attainments. But the child says perversely that she was not made by anybody but that she was plucked from the rose bush near the prison door by her mother and handed over to a proper instructor. Hester is aghast. She says emotionally that Pearl is God's gift to her and that she will not give up Pearl on any account. She requests Dimmesdale to advance her cause, as only he is sympathetic and knows about a mother's right to keep her child. Dimmesdale says that Hester is best suited to rear Pearl, as she alone knows instinctively about the child's requirements. He also says that the child's company can save the mother from committing further sins. The Governor endorses Dimmesdale's views and allows Hester to retain the child. However, he stipulates that the child must be periodically examined either by its mother or Dimmesdale and also sent to school and church meetings. Hester is elated by the success of her mission. She turns down mistress Higgin's invitation to attend a merry meeting in the forest that night. This is the first instance of Pearl saving Hester from sinning.

The Leech :

Roger Chillingworth becomes Dimmesdale's medical adviser. He knows that physical illness usually originates in a mental problem. So he tries to find out what Dimmesdale's problem is. Chillingworth and Dimmesdale stay in adjacent

apartments. Illiterates think that Chillingworth is satan or satan's agent determined to ruin the pious Dimmesdale.

The Leech and the patient:

Dimmesdale and Roger Chillingworth spend much time together. Chillingworth suspects that Dimmesdale is concealing some secret and is bent on tracing it out. Dimmesdale once tells Chillingworth that some men shrink from exposing their black and filthy characters for fear of losing the esteem in which the public hold them. Chillingworth replies bluntly that 'a false show' can promote neither 'God's glory' nor 'man's' welfare.

Looking out through the window, Dimmesdale sees Hester walking across the adjacent burial-ground with Pearl. The mischievous child irreverently skips from one grave to another and then, standing upon the grave of the eminent Isaac Johnson, begins to dance. Hester scolds the child. But the child is heedless and, plucking the prickly furs from a nearby burdock, arranges them along the letter on her mother's bosom. Seeing the child's mischievous pranks, Chillingworth recalls how she bespattered the Governor himself with the dirty water at the cattle through the other day. With the instinct of an innocent child, Pearl points a Chillingworth as the notorious Black man who has already caught hold of Dimmesdale and might catch Hester also. The Child's hint about the nature of the relationship between Chillingworth and Dimmesdale as that between a tormentor and his victim is quite true.

Oneday, Chillingworth generalizes that physical ill health is the direct outcome of a spiritual disorder. Applying this general law to Dimmesdale's illness, Chillingworth asks Dimmesdale to take him into his confidence and confess frankly what is preying upon his heart. He says that he will unbosom himself only to God, the great physician of the soul, who can cure or kill him according to his wish. He rudely asks Chillingworth, who are you to meddle in this matter? and walks out agitatedly. Instead of being wounded by Dimmesdale's rudeness, Chillingworth is only gladdened, as it has made clear that Dimmesdale is harbouring some heinous secret.

Soon Dimmesdale regrets having burst out against the physician. He apologizes to him and the two become reconciled with each other. That day Dimmesdale falls into a deep slumber. Chillingworth stealthily thrusts aside the sleeping minister's vestment and sees something shocking on his bosom. The author does not mention at this point what Chillingworth saw. He merely says that Chillingworth derives from the sight the kind of diabolic pleasure that Satan enjoys; a precious human soul is lost to heaven and won over his kingdom.

The Interior of a heart :

In the discharge of his pastoral duties and in mastery of scriptures, Dimmesdale is far superior to other clergymen. The people look upon him as a 'miracle of holiness' and the mouth - piece of heaven's message. But nobody knows about the burden of crime or angle weighing him down. Sometimes, urged by his longing to confess, he tells his congregation in the course of sermon that he is viler than the vilest 'the worst of single abomination, a tiny of unimaginable iniquity. Next he himself had in his secret closet as a punishment for lapses. Thirdly, he fasts frequently in such a severe manner that his knees tremble beneath him. Finally, he keeps remaining awake 'night after night'. None of these measures serve to lessen his feeling of guilt.

The Minister's Vigil :

One midnight, when the town is all asleep, Dimmesdale steals softly out of his apartment and walking to the place stand on the platform of the scaffold, meant for sinners and law-breakers, where Hester stood for three hours in broad daylight seven long years ago. Wrung by anger he shrieks aloud, thinking that people will wake up, come out of their bed-rooms and see him. But none comes. Then Wilson comes that way, after attending on Governor Winthrop who has just passed away. He looks only at the muddy road and so misses Dimmesdale. Hester and Pearl who also had watched at Winthrop's death-bed pass by the scaffold. Hester has been asked to sew a robe for the dead Governor. Little Pearl mischievously asks beside them on the scaffold at noon. But Dimmesdale in cowardly mood is not prepared to expose

himself openly. He starts saying that he will appear with Hester and Pearl not in the daylight of the world' but on the great Judgement day.

Casting his eyes towards the zenith, Dimmesdale sees a meteor, burning itself out emitting lines of dull red light'. To the guilt ridden Dimmesdale, it looks as though the letter 'A' is written on the sky. Chillingworth who comes that way after having vainly tried to save Governor Winthrop, concluding that it is the outcome of Dimmesdale's somnambulism, he gently takes the latter drawn by the meteor in the sky stands for Angel and indicates that Governor winthrop was made an angel on the previous night.

Another view of Hester:

Hester goes out of the way to help the poor and sick without expecting anything in return from them. So the people who were once hostile become affectionate towards her, calling her 'our Hester'. The letter 'A' which once betokened her adultery now betokens that she is Able, endowed with a woman's strength, to serve mankind altruistically. People who once decried her now respect her. The badge of sin on her bodice is now regarded sacredly like the cross on a nun's bosom. So purifying her presence is, also by dressing austerely and cutting her luxuriant hair. She deliberately makes herself less attractive. There is no room in her heart for love anymore. She grows very reflective, about how women could be enabled to love a richer and more satisfactory life, by reforming society and the deeply set habits of men. Had the men of the time known about her revolutionary views, they would have despised her.

After seeing the agonized Dimmesdale, she grows sympathetic towards him. She understands that Chillingworth is vilely tormenting him under the guise of a friend and counsellor. She wants to free Dimmesdale from Chillingworth's clutches.

Hester and the physician :

Hester tells Chillingworth that she wants to conter to Dimmesdale the nature of the relationship between herself and him. She openly accuses Chillingworth of

Check Your Progress

4. She wants to free ____ from Chillingworth's clutches.

torturing Dimmesdale. She says that Chillingworth has transformed himself into a devil. Chillingworth says that he was kind, true, just and constant nine years ago and that it was she who ruined his life. He says that, by seeing her branded an adulteress, he has avenged himself on her. Pardoning the enemy, says Hester, is a priceless benefit. But Chillingworth says that he is incapable of pardoning. He says that Hester committed the first wrong step of marrying him without any genuine love of him. They all have to endure the pleasant consequence of that original sin. It is a dark necessity which alone of them can escape. He says resignedly, 'Let the black flower blossom as it may' meaning 'Let tragedy work itself out'.

Hester and Pearl :

Chillingworth, bent so low that his grey beard almost touches the ground, creeps away; looking at him, Hester mutters that she hates him. She marvels how she allowed herself to be wrought upon to marry him. She considers it a crime to have reciprocated the warm grasp of his hand and suffered the smile of her lips and eyes to 'melt' into his own. At this point the author personally warns men against marrying the women whose passion is not stirred by them. Women who are unresponsive and remain like marble statues should not be mistaken to live with genuine satisfaction.

In the meantime Pearl, tired of playing in the pool and feeling sorry for having hurt a little bird with a stone, comes back to her mother. She fixes eel-grass on her garb in the shape of the letter 'A'. The 'A' on her mother's dress is scarlet but that on the child's is green. Hester asks Pearl why she wears the scarlet letter. Pearl unconsciously exposes the truth by saying that her mother wears the letter for the same reason that Dimmesdale keeps his hand over the heart. Pearl asks her mother repeatedly why the minister often touches his heart with his hand. Irritated, Hester asks to shut up.

A forest walk :

Hester walks with Pearl along a narrow footpath in the dense forest intending to meet Dimmesdale secretly and warn him against Chillingworth. Seeing Dimmesdale walking towards them listlessly, with his hand on his heart, Hester asks

Pearl to go away and play by herself till she is called back. Happy at the prospect of playing unhindered, Pearl goes away.

The pastor and the parishioner:

Hester tells Dimmesdale that she is unhappy because of the badge of shame that she has to wear always. Dimmesdale confesses that he is also virtuous man. Hester shocks Dimmesdale further by saying that Chillingworth is her husband. Dimmesdale shudders at the prospect of living even one more day with the kind Red Indians or go to England or Germany or France or Italy where nobody will bother about his past. When Dimmesdale says that he is too weak to go anywhere alone. Hester tells him comfortingly that she will accompany him wherever he shifts.

A flood of sunshine :

The brave Hester unfastens her scarlet badge and throws it away on the bank of a stream flowing nearby. Next, she removes the cap on her head, allowing her glossy tresses to flow down. Suddenly, the lovers are flooded by brilliant sunshine, which implies Nature's sympathy towards them. Giving up her sport, Pearl slowly walks towards her mother. Evidently, she is displeased with the presence of Dimmesdale. She does not know that he is her father.

The child at the brook side :

Pearl is puzzled because her mother is not wearing the scarlet badge. She accusingly points her forefinger at Hester's blank bosom. Hester understands her child. Picking up the scarlet badge and re-fastening it on her bodice and then wearing her usual cap on her head, thrusting all her curls into it. Hester appears dull and drab as ever. Pearl at once comes back to her. To entice Pearl, Dimmesdale gives her a kiss on her forehead. The child detesting the kiss, washes her forehead with the water of the brook. The child thus refuses to be drawn into the circle of Hester and Dimmesdale.

The minister in a maze :

Returning from the forest, Dimmesdale is physically and spiritually changed. The man who walked slowly and sadly now walks fast, and cheerfully. He is assailed by evil impulses. 'Encountering an aged deacon, he wants to utter blasphemous remarks, questioning the immortality of the soul. Next he wants to whisper some evil word into an old window's ear. Thirdly, he wants to lean at a young girl and utter some improper remarks that will pollute her mind. Fourthly, seeing a knot of puritan children, he wants to teach some moral towards to them. Finally, he wants to shake hands with the sailor whose ship he proposes to board with Hester and Pearl shortly and exchange some bawdy jokes with him. His brief stay in the forest has thus resulted in the corruption of his mind. Chillingworth enters his duty. Somehow, he seems to know about Dimmesdale's mind by staying at the parishioners may not find their pastor in the following year. Dimmesdale replies in the affirmative. He makes a veiled remark that God might take him a better place soon. After Chillingworth goes away, Dimmesdale burns the unfinished text of his election sermon and writes a fresh one working on it throughout the night.

The New England holiday :

It is the day of the election when a new Governor is going to be installed in office in the presence of the people. It is a holiday for all. The market place is thronged by children, merchants and labourers. Hester and Pearl are standing by the scaffold. Pearl is surprised to learn from her mother that Dimmesdale will pass by but not greet them. She does not understand why the minister who was so intimate with mother in the forest will distance himself from her in market place in day light. The captain of the Bristol-bound ship approaches Hester and tells her that Chillingworth has proposed to travel with her and Dimmesdale in the same ship. Hester is horrified at the prospect of the sinister Chillingworth dogging them. She sees him in a corner of the crowd. Chillingworth is bent on sabotaging her plan to escape with Dimmesdale safely to England.

The Procession :

The procession towards the meeting house starts. It is there that Dimmesdale is going to deliver his election sermon solemnizing the installation of the new Governor. First to appear is the procession of the musicians playing a variety of instruments and investing the scene with a high heroic air. Next, come the military men whose weapon shimmer like sunshine. Thirdly, there come dignified magistrate like Bradstreet, Endicott, Dudley and Bellingham who is going to lay down office. These officers are known for the sobriety and solid defense of the clergymen while Dimmesdale walks erect without bestowing a look of recognition even Hester and Pearl. So much wrapped is he in the lofty spiritual thoughts which are going to be expressed in his sermon. Reaching the market house, Dimmesdale delivers his sermon which has an undertone of sadness, as though he is confessing his guilt.

Mistress Hibbins says that Dimmesdale and seven other clergymen have signed a pact with the evil one in the forest and that, if Pearl accompanies her to the forest she can see the sign of sin on Dimmesdale's chest. The master of the ship sends Hester a message through Pearl to the effect that Chillingworth has taken charge of Dimmesdale and proposes to bring him to ship and so Hester need not worry about him. The message deepens Hester's anxiety.

The revelation of the Scarlet letter:

Dimmesdale's inspired and inspiring sermon is over and he walks out of the meeting hall with a deathly pallor on his face, as though he is on the verge of death. Quite unexpectedly, he ascends the steps of the scaffold and stands on it, to the great shock and amazement of all the spectators. Chillingworth tries to prevent him from degrading and dishonouring himself in the eyes of public. At Dimmesdale's invitation Hester and Pearl also ascend the scaffold and stand beside him, supporting him. Dimmesdale bares revealed the livid letter 'A' on his chest. All are startled. Chillingworth expresses his disappointment, saying that by exposing himself to the public at large Dimmesdale has escaped his never-ceasing torture. Dimmesdale does not get angry with Chillingworth instead, he calmly appeals to God to forgive

Chillingworth for he also has sinned. Hester expresses the pious wish that she and Dimmesdale can reunite in the next life. But Dimmesdale harshly rules out this possibility. He says both of them have violated the law and sinned and so cannot reunite in heaven. Expressing his gratitude to God for having got him to expose himself to the public he prays that God's will be done and sinks down dead.

Conclusion:

After Dimmesdale's death, the stigma found on his chest was interpreted in several different ways. Some were of the opinion that Dimmesdale himself burnt his flesh with red-hot iron to show his remorse on the day Hester was stood on the scaffold. Some others said that the mark was brought about by Chillingworth's magic and drugs. Some attributed it in the tooth of remorse that incessantly grows at his heart and made the mark of shame appear outwardly on his chest. His friends and admirers stood on the scaffold and made the mark of shame appear sinner in the scaffold in order to teach his followers that all are sinners in the eyes of God.

After Dimmesdale died, Chillingworth loses his strength because he has nobody to fight against. He wilts and withers like a weed in the sun. Hester and Pearl disappear suddenly. After many years Hester alone returns to her cottage. It appears that Pearl is happily married and settled in England. Hester continues to wear the letter 'A' on her bosom but it is not viewed by others not with derision but with reverence.

9.7 Hester Prynne on the scaffold in the market place

It is a summer morning two centuries ago. A knot of male and female inhabitants of Boston are standing before the iron-clamped prison-door. It looks as if they are waiting to see something solemn. Are they gathered there to see the execution of a criminal or a witch like old mistress Hibbins, the bitter-tempered widow of the magistrate? Or, are they looking forward to the whipping up of a drunken Red Indian? The women of the period like Elizabeth as counterparts in England, are notoriously unrefined and love thronging round the gallows to watch a painful hanging. The women spectators make most uncharitable comments on Hester

Prynne who is going to emerge from the prison. A fifty-year old hag says that the magistrates were overmuch merciful to Hester and that, if the matter had been left to the women's choice, they would have given her a far severe punishment, befitting her lapse. Another woman laments that Hester has brought disgrace to women and ought to have been sentenced to death. It is felt by a virulent-woman that as Hester is likely to hide the badge she should be branded with a red hot iron. Some express their anxiety that the sympathy shown to Hester might lead to a general deterioration of morals and the spoiling of the wives and daughters too. Rev. Dimmesdale is sorrow because Hester belongs to his congregation. A man pessimistically observes that only fear of dire punishment keeps women from erring.

The 'grim and grishy' town beadle leads Hester Prynne, carrying her three month old baby, out of the prison. First she hugs the baby close to her bosom, intending to conceal the letter 'A' sewn in red cloth and fantastically embroidered in her bodice. But, then, she takes the baby on her arm so that the crowd around can see without any impediment. She is a tall lady with dark, glossy hair and statuesque features. Her beauty shines out and her very ignominious situation is like a halo. Her beautiful dress which she sewed in prison expresses her desperate recklessness. The beadle says loudly that she is to stand on the platform of the pillory called the scaffold till an hour past meridian, displaying the two signs of her immortality, her baby and the scarlet letter on her gown. She is led up to the spot, with every step causing her acute agony, as if the unfeeling multitudes around her is trampling upon her heart. She ascends the wooden steps and stands on the scaffold, with her face held up by the framework. Though the crowd keeps staring at her most inhumanly, the author observes that only fear of dire punishment keeps women from erring.

Hester suddenly notices the white man, with whom she was associated in the past, standing with a Red Indian far off from her. The white man understands that Hester recognized him. He lays his finger on his lips, there expecting her to keep his identity secret. The white man learns from a bystander that Hester's learned husband proposed to join her later. Unfortunately, he did not join her though two years passed by. In the meantime, she had a secret lover and gave birth to a child. Even though the

magistrates were ready to withdraw the punishment imposed on her if she named her lover, she stubbornly refused to expose him. Hearing Hester's previous history, the white man is upset. He swears vehemently that Hester's illicit lover should be traced.

In the meantime, an unexpected development takes place. Governor Bellingham and the reverend John Wilson, both seated on the balcony, pressure the Reverend Dimmesdale to use his good offices to make Hester confess. Dimmesdale has no other option but to do the hard job of making delicate women confess in public. He addresses her in a tremulous tone, saying that her protecting her lover is an act of misplaced sympathy. He expects her lover, however highly placed, to voluntarily admit his guilt in open and stand with her on the scaffold. Hester is moved by his address. Even the child is moved and gazes at him for a moment.

Hester is resolute. She says in a ringing tone that she will never betray her lover. Because of her strong willed negativity, she is led back to prison.

This part of the novel is surcharged with irony, the husband whom Hester had given up for lost turns up and eye-witnesses her publicly branded an adulteress. He vows to expose her secret lover whom Hester is determined to protect at any cost.

9.8 Hester's life after release from prison

Hester's term of confinement coming to an end, she is released from prison. But her life outside prison is even more miserable than it was inside. At the market place where she was stood at the scaffold and stared at by all and sundry, she was able to bear with her humiliation because it lasted only a few hours. But after release every day is bear with her humiliation because it lasted only a few hours. But after release every day is a day of agony and ignominy with the preacher and the moralist pointing to her as pattern of women's frailty and sinful passion. It looks as though the infancy she carries will be remembered even after her death. She could have escaped to her native village in England, or to some other European country or into the neighbouring forest where the severe Puritanic code does not prevail and where she can emerge from her shameful past into a new state of being. But now she is fatally attracted to the place where she is insulted daily. Invisible and unbreakable iron links

seem to bind her here. She wants to love and die here so that she and her lover will be united in the next life.

Hester occupies a small cottage on the outskirts of the village far from other human habitations. Even the land around her cottage is barren. Hester is good at needle work and supports herself by embroidering the ruffs of the Governor, bands of ministers, scarfs of military men, babies, little caps and sometimes the shrouds of dead babies. But she is never called upon to decorate the veils of brides, as she is considered a rank adulteress unfit to have anything to do with a pure lady. Hester spends very little of what she earns on her upkeep. She delights in gorgeously decorating her child. She spends the major part of her income on making coarse garments and donating them to the poor. But even those beneficiaries ungratefully revile her. The rich dames whose houses she has to enter to give the embroidered outfits wound her with their belief but most acrimonious remarks. The clergyman, seeing her in the market, invariably draws a crowd around her and exhorts them to mock at her. When she goes to church to derive solace from the universal Father, the preacher makes her the text of his sermon on woman's frailty. The ignorant booboo that the letter 'A' on her breast is dyed not with any earthy tinge but with infernal fine, that will blaze even at night; wounded and lacerated by all, Hester feels that she will not be shocked even if the leaves of trees whisper her dark story, or the summer breeze murmurs about it or the winter blast shrieks it aloud.

What shook Hester most when she walks alone is the jeering at her by venerable ministers and magistrates who are usually viewed as models of piety and justice. Sanctified matrons as well as young girls, passing her by, frown on her but at the same time view her with a brief envious look, as if they too would like to throw morals to the winds and secretly enjoy the carnal pleasure that Hester has enjoyed. The revelation that all are sinful in thought if not in deed makes her very sad. She curses Satan because he has not left anybody pure for her to revere.

**Check Your
Progress**

5. Hester
supports herself
by _____

9.9 Arthur Dimmesdale's Vigil on the Scaffold

The physician Roger Chillingworth, sarcastically called the leech, suspects that the Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale is harbouring a secret in the inmost recesses of his heart. He firmly holds that Dimmesdale's emaciation is directly traceable to his profound but hidden mental and spiritual disorder. He asks the minister to confess what is gnawing at his heart to enable him to give the most effective treatment to the patient. Dimmesdale does not want anybody to pry into his secrets. He bursts out that he will reveal his secrets, only to God, the physician of the soul. To assuage his anguish, he mortifies his body in a most painful way. He whips himself black and blue in his secret chambers, fasts till he is too feeble to remain standing and sometimes avoids sleeping for several consecutive nights. None of these methods of expiation give him respite from mental pain.

Dimmesdale realizes that nothing short of confession will alleviate his anguish. So, in the course of his sermons, he tells the congregation that he is a vile sinner. But the listeners do not take his statement at his face value. They view it as the minister's attempt to remind them of their far more hideous sinfulness. One midnight, stung by his guilt, the minister steals out of his bed-room and walks to the market place and stands on the very scaffold where Hester Prynne was stood seven long years ago, with the scarlet letter A blazing on her bodice, a target of public condemnation. But now in stark contrast, there is nobody to witness Dimmesdale self-accusation. The efforts show that Dimmesdale wants to confess but is too cowardly to do so in broad day light. Standing alone, he shrieks out loudly in order to make the sleeping townsmen come out and see his self-exposure. But people are sound asleep and nobody comes out. Vaguely disturbed Governor Bellingham and his witch Sister Mistress Hibbins peep out of their windows and not seeing anybody, shut themselves in to resume their sleep.

The death of old Governor Winthrop causes some unexpected activity. Reverend John Wilson, having attended Winthrop's death, limps his way back home, too engrossed in the death of the dignitary to notice the gaunt figure on the scaffold. The next to pass by the scaffold at that odd hour is Hester Prynne with her impish

child Pearl. Impelled by a wild desire to expose himself in the company of his illicit woman partner, Dimmesdale asks the mother and child to stand beside him on the scaffold. They readily do so Pearl unknowingly exposes Dimmesdale's cowardice by daring him to stand on the pedestal in broad day light. Dimmesdale winces at this suggestion and saves exposed himself only before God on the day of Judgement.

The next day the sexton tells Dimmesdale that the lurid 'A' in the sky stands for Angel and symbolizes that God has blessed Winthrop and made him an angel. The reader might think that Dimmesdale who heroically struggled to expose himself richly deserves the title of angel.

9.10 The Death of Dimmesdale

Meeting in the forest, Hester and Dimmesdale decide to run away to England to live peacefully there without bothering about their guilty past. They arrange to board a Bristol-bound ship on the day following the election/sermon by Dimmesdale, solemnizing the initiation of the new Governor. Two difficulties crop up. One is Pearl's innate aversion to Dimmesdale on account of his unwillingness to ally with her and her mother openly in the city. The other difficulty is the intrusion of the leech Roger Chillingworth who ferrets out Dimmesdale's secret plan and decides to accompany him on board the same ship. On the appointed day, a mammoth procession comprising musicians, Military men, magistrates and ministers makes its way to the meeting house. There is abstract look on Dimmesdale's face. The message of the ship's captain confirming Chillingworth's accompaniment, further deepens Hester's sorrow. The Election sermon, delivered by Dimmesdale, is marked by his profound sorrow and unshakeable feeling of guilt. It is a prelude to the momentous decision that he is going to take soon, shattering his and Hester's dream of escape.

After the sermon is over, the crowd rushes out. They all start marching towards the town-hall where a grand banquet will be held to mark the end of the day's ceremony. All the people talk rapturously about Dimmesdale's great sermon, inspired and inspiring. Dimmesdale comes out, feeble and tottering. There is a deathly pallor on his face. Before the spectators could foresee his act, he ascends the steps of the

scaffold and calls Hester and Pearl to come up to him and stand beside him. Pearl responds at once. Chillingworth appears on the scene suddenly, as if he has emerged from the nearby region. Chillingworth thinks only of how Dimmesdale has escaped his torture by publicly confessing his sin on the scaffold. Dimmesdale invokes God's blessing on his tormentor Chillingworth.

May God forgive thee! Thou too hast deeply sinned!

He tears away the clothes that cover his chest and reveals to the spectators the letter 'A' branded on his flesh. The people are profoundly shocked. Supporting him on her bosom, Hester asks him and Pearl sheds tears to her rightful father Dimmesdale who, has misgivings that the child may not take to him spontaneously. Evidently Dimmesdale sinks down dead.

In a kind of epilogue, Hawthorne reveals what happened after Dimmesdale's death. There were numerous interpretations of the stigma seen on Dimmesdale's chest. Some said that the acutely remorseful minister branded the letter 'A' on his flesh with a red-hot iron on the very day Hester ascended the scaffold seven years ago. Another interpretation is that, with the help of powerful magic and drugs, Chillingworth inscribed the letter on Dimmesdale's flesh. Some other argued that the letter was the automatic outward projection of the minister's incessant remorse. Dimmesdale's friends and admirers stoutly denied that there was any mark whatever on his breast. They contended that Dimmesdale died on the scaffold voluntarily only to teach his followers that even their choicest leader was a sinner and that in the view of infinite, purity, we are sinners all alike.

How did Dimmesdale's death affect Chillingworth? He bequeathed all his property to Pearl. The author says that Chillingworth's hatred towards Dimmesdale was also a kind of love. The object of his love - hate having died, Chillingworth wilted and withered away 'like a weed'.

Hester and Pearl suddenly disappeared from the city. After many years, Hester alone returned to her cottage on the outskirts of the city. Perhaps Pearl got married and settled down in England. Hester frequently received valuable gifts from Pearl but

did not use them. One day she was seen embroidering a baby garment probably for her grandchild. Hester continued to wear 'A' and it evoked not the scorn and bitterness but the awe and reverence of the people around her.

9.11 Character Sketches

Roger Chillingworth :

Like Dimmesdale, Chillingworth is also a great scholar. He is deformed with the shoulder higher than the other. Physically barred from romantic pursuits, he devotes himself to such odd subjects as alchemy. When he is past the prime of youth, he comes across the charming but poverty - stricken Hester Prynne. He takes advantage of her low economic status and marries her without bothering to find out whether she genuinely loves him or not. It is this misalliance that leads to many tragic happenings later.

Chillingworth's great expectations fail miserably. After marrying Hester, he plans to settle in Boston. He sends Hester there in advance hoping to rejoin her after solving some urgent personal problems. Unfortunately, on his way to Boston he falls into the hands of Red Indians and is detained by them. She develops an illicit relationship with the clergyman, Arthur Dimmesdale and begets a child, getting branded as an adulteress and wearing the letter 'A' on her dress. In his capacity as physician, Chillingworth gains access to Hester in prison and squarely lays the blame for all that has happened on her marrying him without real love. He did not admit that he is primarily responsible, as it was he who exploited her innocence and forced himself on her. But Chillingworth flatly refuses saying that things will move as directed and dictated by fate. He was fatalistic and uses it as a mask to cover his sinister character.

Chillingworth is aptly nicknamed leech. In his capacity, as physician, he attaches himself to Dimmesdale and destroys him by slow degrees. His influence is seen in Dimmesdale growing weaker and weaker. He is sure and determined to get first hand information from him. He cunningly tempts Dimmesdale to come out with the truth, suggesting that a frank admission of guilt would relieve of his tension and

contribute to his physical health. He continues to watch Dimmesdale's moods and movements with even greater keenness. To get at what exactly they plan to do, Chillingworth puts some seemingly innocuous Questions. When the unaware Dimmesdale says that God may love him away Chillingworth's suspicion is confirmed. Next, he shadows Hester and finds out that the lovers intend to board the Bristol-bound ship on the day following the installation of new governor. He wants to pursue them wherever they go and resume his torture. So he reserves a berth for himself on the same ship.

Chillingworth is taken back when, soon after delivering the election sermon, Dimmesdale ascends the scaffold with Hester and Pearl and publicly acknowledges his guilt. Chillingworth's plan to keep the minister under his control and subject him to endless torture fails. Through death the minister has achieved freedom from his anguish.

The dying Dimmesdale appeals to God to forgive Chillingworth. Chillingworth is touched by Dimmesdale's mercy. He realizes that Dimmesdale has died, because his unrelenting pressure and insinuations. Pricked by his conscience, Chillingworth bequeaths all property to Pearl. He grows weaker and weaker just like his last days and dies uncared for. He is singly punished by nemesis for all his sins.

A celebrated American critic has advanced the view that Chillingworth's relationship with Dimmesdale borders on homosexuality. Dimmesdale's worsening emaciation after falling into Chillingworth's hands is attributed by the critic to Hester's irresistible sexual demands just as his resolve to accompany Dimmesdale to England is traced to his ardent, though perverted, passion. Beyond such wild conjectures there is not much solid textual evidence for the critic's bizarre interpretation.

Hester Prynne :

There is not much information about the life that Hester Prynne lived in England. All that we know is that her parents were poor. Probably they married Hester off to the deformed Chillingworth because they did not have the wherewithal to find

her a more suitable partner. After marriage Chillingworth sent Hester alone to England in advance himself proposing to rejoin her after finishing some important private business. But his plan did not materialize. On his way to Boston he was captured by the Red Indians and they retained him for such a long time that Hester gave him up deed and contracted an illicit relationship with her pastor, Arthur Dimmesdale and bore him a female child. This led to the magistrates of Boston charging her with adultery and making her stand on the scaffold, wearing the letter betokening her adultery. It is at this point that the novel opens.

Hence there is no other alternative for her but to bear her hardships with tight-lipped patience. Occupying a lone cottage on the outskirts of Boston, She ekes out a meagre living by embroidering the clothing of the rich. What she earns is barely sufficient to support herself and her child. In spite of her hand to mouth existence, she is very generous and kind to the poor to whom she donates the coarse garments she herself makes with back breaking pains. The people whom she goes out of the way to help hardly ever reciprocate her kindness. What is worse, they speak harshly and damagingly about her. She attends on the sick and the disabled. Gradually people come to realize her worth and sterling character and begin calling her 'our Hester' and 'sister of charity'. Through silent and persistent efforts, she softens the minds of people. The people now view the letter 'A' on her dress not as a token of her adultery but as a sign of her ability. They are so much captivated by her unsparing charitable acts.

Hester's little child Pearl is the anchor and mainstay of her life. Hester is sustained in desperate moments by Pearl's prattle and pranks. It is therefore a bolt from the blue when the Governor Bellingham, considering her an unworthy example to her child to follow, decides to snatch her from Hester and entrust her to some other capable woman. We see an altogether different Hester when the even tenor of her life is threatened. She told him that she will die if she is separated from her child. She who never before looked up to her secret lover Dimmesdale for any help now appeals to him to use his good office. He says that only Hester knows what her child's needs are and how to cater to them. His second argument that Pearl's presence is necessary

to project Hester from temptations proves prophetic, as Hester, with her child restored to her, successfully resists mistress Hibbins' invitation to come to the forest.

After release from prison, Hester leads a very disciplined life. Never is she drawn sexually towards Dimmesdale. Never does she seek to re-establish the broken tie. But her sympathy for him gushes when she finds him, driven by midnights. Chillingworth gently persuades him to come back home. But Hester knows for certain that it is Chillingworth who turns a deaf ear to her entreaty; she decides to meet Dimmesdale in the forest and win him against the machinations of Chillingworth. The meeting with Dimmesdale in the forest has an electrifying effect on Hester. She reveals to him that Chillingworth is her husband. Dimmesdale is shocked by this revelation. She pulls down the feeble Dimmesdale on her bosom and comforts him. The relationship between Dimmesdale and Hester at this point is like the relationship between a dependent child and its dependable mother. It is only Hester who suggests to him to disentangle himself from Chillingworth and escape to England and there assuming a new name start life afresh. When Dimmesdale expresses his inability to go to England alone, Hester tells him in unmistakable terms that she will accompany him wherever he goes. Having taken his momentous decision, all her repressed womanhood surges up. Her glossy hair cascades in rich profusion. Her face radiates a warm smile. Unfortunately, her joy is short lived Pearl compels her to re-fasten the letter 'A' on her bosom and thrust her luxuriant hair into her grey cap. However Hester comforts herself and Dimmesdale that they can reach England in a few days and lead a normal, uninhibited life there; unfortunately this avenue is closed and Hester finds herself in a stifling cul-de-sac, as Chillingworth scents their plan and arranges to accompany them on board the same ship.

Pearl :

When the novel opens, Pearl is a three month- old baby nestling in her mother Hester's bosom stained with the letter 'A'. She grows very naughty and Hester has a tough time, trying to control her. As Hester has been made to live in a lonely cottage outside the city, Pearl has nobody to play with. Her only play mates are birds and flowers.

As Pearl proves very mischievous, Governor Bellingham concludes that the supposedly immoral; Hester is unfit to rear her and plans to entrust her upbringing to some worthy matron. In order to plead for the retention of Pearl, Hester takes her to Governor Bellingham's house. Governor asks Pearl many questions one of which is. Who created her? Pearl has been taught catechisms, by her mother. But now she is seized with a perverse impulse and so replies that she was not created by anybody but was plucked from a rose bush by her mother. The reply appears nonsensical but, if we view the rose as a symbol of unlawful and unrestrained sexual passion, Pearl's answer is quite apt as she is the product of an illicit union.

Pearl has an instinctive knack of judging good and bad. She always associates Chillingworth with evil and warns both Hester and Dimmesdale against him. She has misgivings about Dimmesdale too. She does not like him standing on the scaffold unnoticed at night, holding herself and Hester by his side; at Dimmesdale's intimacy with Hester in the forest, she is struck by and unwilling to share her mother's love with a third person. She is repelled when Dimmesdale kisses her in a bid to win her pristine purity. During the procession, passing by Hester without greeting her and without even bestowing on her a look of recognition, in her childish judgement Dimmesdale is a hypocrite, pure and simple, doing things stealthily and never openly.

Pearl is reconciled with Dimmesdale when latter, finishing the election, sermon, boldly ascends the scaffold in the presence of all and what is more daring, confesses his guilt and shows the public the livid mark of his sin on his chest, namely, the letter 'A' scorched with a red hot iron, on his flesh. Now, Pearl kisses Dimmesdale and steps down only after the father's death.

After Dimmesdale's death, the repentant Chillingworth bequeaths all his property to Pearl. But Hester does not seem to make use of it. Pearl is happily married and settled in England, the haven which Hester and Dimmesdale wanted to reach. Hester is seen embroidering a baby-garment most probably meant for Pearl's child. Befitting her name Pearl is blessed with immaculate purity and so let us hope, will her child be.

(1) Governor Bellingham

Governor Bellingham rules over the white settlement of Boston with an iron hand. He cannot tolerate even the slightest deviation from the puritan moral code. It is he who decrees the imprisonment of Hester Prynne for her moral lapse, compelling her to wear the letter 'A', token of her adultery, on her dress. It is he who wants to separate Pearl from her mother for her supposed inability to bring her up along Christian lines. He does evince some sympathy towards Hester, promising to revoke her punishment if she would identify her illicit lover. Because Hester stubbornly refuses to reveal her lover, Bellingham cannot do anything in her favour. Like all the spectators, Bellingham is also shocked and when, after finishing the election sermon, Dimmesdale ascends the scaffold, confesses his guilt and sinks down dead.

The Reverend John Wilson :

The Reverend John Wilson is older than Dimmesdale but treated the junior clergyman with respect and reverence. He notices the emotional tone of Dimmesdale's speech stressing Hester's right to retain and rear Pearl herself. He endorses Dimmesdale's views totally and so Governor Bellingham has no other option but to yield. This shows his duteousness. Unfortunately, he has not noticed Dimmesdale standing on the scaffold. Like all the others, Wilson is also shocked when Dimmesdale, after delivering the election sermon ascends the scaffold, declares his guilt and falls down dead.

Mistress Hibbins :

Mistress Hibbins is Governor Bellingham's sister but does most unlawful things. She is in touch with law-breakers who periodically assembles in the forest and revel to their hearts' content. She tries her best to draw Hester into this evil circle. When Hester is on her way back home after a heated argument with Governor Bellingham to establish her right to retain and rear her child herself Hibbins invites her to a nocturnal rally in the forest but Hester wisely declines it. It appears as though

Hibbins is endowed with some super-natural powers. She talks knowingly with both Dimmesdale and Hester about their decisive meeting in the forest. It is recorded in the manuscript that Hawthorne uses as his source that Hibbins was hanged for her unlawful activities.

9.12 Summation

Hawthorne's art is not a reproduction of what already exists but a making visible of other things. His conception of setting is symbolic and his use of descriptive details are designed to suggest moral realities, so also are his characters more persuasive and powerful as representatives of recurrent ideas rather than as realistic human beings. His novel is a mode of thinking, and his typical settings, plots and characters are created to fulfil the requirements of a larger symbolic design. Society stands for safety and security. The utopian dreams of happiness and virtue are contrasted with the realities of crime and death.

9.13 Answers to CYP Questions

1. *The Scarlet Letter*
2. Hester Prynne
3. Pearl
4. Dimmesdale
5. embroidering

9.14 Question

1. *The Scarlet Letter* is a novel where the symbols are closely woven into the structure. Discuss

9.15 For Further Reading

1. Studies in American Literature – Jagdish Chander, Narindar S. Pradhan
2. Cavalcade of the American Novel - Wajen knecht Edward

Unit – 10

Old Man and the Sea

-Ernest Hemingway

10.1 Introduction

Ernest Hemingway (1898-1961) is the fictional laureate of the 'lost generation'. He has the genius to report the modern man's dilemma. He is a super craftsman and a great story teller. He looks at the world as a wasteland where most men waste their on wine and witty conversation. The world of his novels is a world at war where the figure of death looms large. When Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, praise was given to his powerful style – forming mastery of the art of modern narration.

10.2 Unit Objectives

- Ernest Hemingway's mastery of the art of modern narration
- Symbols employed in this novel

10.3 Unit Structure

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Unit Objectives

10.3 Unit Structure

10.4 Life and Works

10.5 Outline story

10.6 Summary

10.7 Character sketches

10.7.1 Santiago

10.7.2 Manolin

10.8 The happenings before the eighty-fifth trip starts

10.9 Santiago catching the Marlin

10.10 Santiago returning home

10.11 Summation

10.12 Answers to CYP Questions

10.13 Questions

10.14 For Further Reading

10.4 Life and Works

Ernest Hemingway was born on July 21, 1898, in a prominent family in the wealth, conservative suburb of Chicago known as Oakpark Hemingway derived his love of sports from his father who was an amateur sportsman. His mother was a talented musician and painter. At school, Hemingway played football and also contributed regularly to the school magazine, *The Trapeze*.

Though Hemingway wanted to go to the University of Illinois, his attention was drawn to journalism. He got a job as a reporter on the *Kansas city star*. As Hemingway thirsted for a life of action he became an ambulance driver in Italy, distributing mail, Tobacco and chocolate to soldiers in the trenches. Badly injured in war, Hemingway was admitted in a hospital where he fell in love with a nurse by name Agnes. But Agnes married an Italian army major. Hemingway was deeply disappointed. He expressed his anguish in his first great novel *A Farewell to Arms*. He travelled widely in Africa, participating in big game hunting. These experiences went into the making of his novel *Green Hills of Africa* (1935). Hemingway spent several years in Spain, observing bull-fighting from close quarters. He wrote a novel entitled *Death in the after-noon* (1932) about bull-fighting.

Hemingway played an active role in World War II. After the war was over, he returned to Cuba to fish. In the novel *The Old Man and the Sea* Hemingway identified himself with the old fisherman Santiago who bravely fights against natural forces far more powerful than himself. This novel brought him the Pulitzer Prize in 1953. In 1954 he was awarded the Nobel prize for literature. Repeatedly injured and spending long periods in hospitals, Hemingway grew sick of his life. Perhaps like Santiago he felt that he had no luck anymore. To put an end to his suffering, he killed himself with a gun in 1961.

10.5 Outline Story

Santiago is a very old fisherman who has not caught any fish for eighty-four days. He kills a giant-sized marlin with his harpoon. He is proud of his achievement. But misfortune comes in the shape of sharks which bite large chunks of flesh off the body of the Marlin. The old man fights valiantly, using his harpoon, club and knife. They are all destroyed. The oldman is unarmed. He sails home with the huge skeleton of the marlin after three days of struggle on the sea.

The next morning Manolin visits the oldman and plans to go on fishing expedition with him despite his lack of luck. While the shallow tourists are chatting about the large skeleton of the marlin, the oldman is sleeping in his shack and dreaming about the lions. The dream shows that his adventurous spirit is still vibrant. Man may be destroyed but not defeated.

10.6 Summary

Santiago is an oldman who fishes in the Gulf stream. He has gone eighty four days without catching a fish. He has a boykeeper by name Manolin. Having accompanied the oldman for forty days and not having caught any fish, Manolin was compelled by his father to leave the unlucky oldman and serve under another man lucky enough to catch fish everyday. Though generally considered unlucky, Santiago has faith and takes him to a restaurant called the *Terrace* and buys him a beer. Santiago observes successful fisherman who catch Marlins, and laying them across planks, take them to a nearby fish house from where to export them to Havana. Some other fisherman catch big sharks and cut them into strips for salting.

Manolin is deeply attached to the oldman. He insists on serving Santiago in some capacity or other. He calls his association with the oldman every since he was fine and eye-witnessed the oldman clubbing a green coloured fish to death. The boy carries the oldman's gaff and harpoon to his shack where there are pictures of Jesus and the virgin on the wall. The old man pretends to have a pot of yellow rice with fish but in reality he has nothing to eat. The boy understands this and buys food, black

beans and rice, fried bananas and some stew and two beers – on credit for the oldman. The oldman hopes to clear the debt by giving the belly meat of a big fish that he might catch.

Santiago narrates to Manolin how he went to Africa in his boyhood and saw lions on the beaches. Manolin would rather hear Santiago talk about baseball player John J. Mac Craw. He boosts the oldman by telling him that he is an incomparable fisherman. Sending the boy home, Santiago removes his trousers, lolls it into a pillow and goes to sleep. He dreams of lions playing like cats on the African lions as much as he loves the boy. Waking up early he goes to Manolin's house to wake him up. Finding the boy sleeping without trousers, Santiago gently lifts the boy's leg and hold it until he wakes. The oldman apologizes to the boy for what he has done but the boy says generously. "It is what a man must do". The boy buys two coffees for the oldman who takes him no food but a bottle of water only. The boy gives some sardines and butts to the oldman and wishes him good luck. He helps Santiago push his skiff into the water. Fitting the rope lashings of the oars into the pins, Santiago rows out of the harbor in the dark. This is his eighty fifth trip.

The oldman goes far, learning the smell of the land behind: he inhales the fresh smell of the ocean. He sees the phosphorescent shine of the phosphorescent shine of the Gulf weed in a part of the ocean called the 'great well' which is seven hundred fathoms deep. Shrimps, bait fish and big schools of squid gather here. They rise to the surface at night and get eaten up by the wandering fish. Rowing in the dark, the oldman hears the sound of flying fish jumping out of water. He is fond of the principal friends. He pities weak birds, especially the dark terns that are eaten up by the neary and strong rabber birds. The sea is beautiful at the same time cruel, for delicately structured birds that dip into waves for food get drowned.

Young fishermen like the roughness of the sea which they regard as elmar, that is Masculine. They look upon the sea as an enemy. But the oldman regards the sea as lamar, that is, as woman doing wild and wicked things when affected by the moon. The sun rises thinly from the sea. The oldman sees a man-of-war bird trying to catch the flying fish. The Portuguese man-of-war following the boar is

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1. Santiago sees _____ on the beaches, in his dreams.

contemptuously dismissed by the oldman and a what he thinks of the huge, stupid – looking logger-heads, with their strange love-making and habit of eating Portuguese-looking logger-heads, with their strange love-making and habit of eating Portuguese men of war with their eyes shut. Next, he thinks of turtles whose hearts beat long after they are butchered. He eats turtles eggs and drinks shark liver oil, the former to strengthen himself and the latter to resist colds. At this time, he sees a lot of tuna fall with silvery shine jumping in all directions. One tuna falls into the skiff and is clubbed to death for kindness by the oldman. He hopes to use it as bait. He is happy that it weights ten pounds.

As there is nobody to talk to, the oldman talks to himself at critical moments. He feels miserable as there is not even a radio to bring him news about baseball. The blue hills at a distance look white as if snow-capped. The sea is very dark. Sunlight makes prisons in the water. The oldman sees that one of the three lines thrown by him is being pulled gently. He concludes that it must be a Marlin eating the Sardines at a depth of one hundred fathoms or seven hundred feet. A gentle pull is followed by a harder one. The oldman feels 'something hard and unbelievably heavy.' At once he unrolls a reserve coil and lets the line slip down. He is sure that the Marlin has the butt stuck up crosswire in its mouth and that it is moving off with it. He asks the fish to surface, so that he can put harpoon into it. But the fish does not care for his dictates and moves slowly away, dragging the skiff with it.

The oldman wishes for the boy Manolin's company, as he finds it increasingly difficult to let the line slip or pull it back. The fish swims steadily even after four hours. The oldman drinks a little water to refresh himself. He has no fears and feels strong. The sun goes down. The oldman lies around his neck in such a way that it hands down over his back. He puts the taunt line over the suck so that he will not be hurt however hard the line is pulled by the Marlin, hearing against the bow, he thinks that he is quite comfortable.

But the fact is that he is pained. He learns to endure pain. He decides to eat the tuna in the following morning, before it is spoilt. During the night, he sees two porpoise, a male and female making love to one another. He views all fish, including

the hooked Marlin, as his brothers. He pities the Marlin and wonders how old it is. He admires it as it swims and its male partners jumped up to see the female fish to pardon them and then butchered it promptly. At this time some other fish takes another bait. The oldman connects together all the coils, wishing that the boy were there to help him. It is early morning now. Suddenly the mooring pulls hard. The oldman falls down. A cut is made below his eye and starts bleeding. After sometime, the blood dries up.

The oldman is confident of catching the fish, as he has enough line to handle it. He says loudly that he loves and respects the Marlin and at the same time swears to kills it, before sunset. A bird trying to nest on the line, teeters. The oldman asks the bird whether it is its final trip. He wonders why the bird looks so tired even though the night was windless. He wonders about the degeneration of birds. What are birds coming to? he calls the bird then go in search of food take any man or bird or fish. At this time the Marlin pulls the line hard once again. The line herks and the oldman again falls down frightened, the bird flies away. The tontine cuts the oldman's right hand and it starts bleeding. He dips the bleeding hand into the sea, until all the blood is washed away. He decides to eat the tuna to strengthen himself. Putting one knee on the tuna, he cuts six wedge-shaped strips from neck to the backbone down to the belly of the fish.

He says that cramp is a 'treachery of one's own body'. He believes that, if the boy were with him, he would rub and close his fingers. At this time, the Marlin comes out all its glory. Its head and back are dark purple and the stripes on the sides are a light lavender. Its 'sword' is as long as a baseball bat and tapered like of rapier. It re-enters water smoothly like a driver. The oldman notes that the Marlin is two feet longer than the skiff. The fish seems to be normal. It does not appear to have panicked.

The oldman observes that though not as intelligent as man, the Marlin is nobler and abler. The ply is that it is not aware of its own immense strength. The oldman wants to prove his manliness and will and intelligence. He settles comfortably against the bow, reconciling himself to his suffering. He seeks divine succor in

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2. The oldman
hooked _____
fish.

catching the Marlin. He starts saying his prayers; he finds Hall Mary's easier to say than our fathers. After saying a Hall Mary he adds. 'Blessed virgin, pray for the death of this fish. Wonderful though he is he reaffirms his resolve to kill the marlin 'in all its neatness and its glory; He knows that he is engaged in an unjust act but is impelled by an inner urge to prove' what a man can do and what a man endures; It is getting into the afternoon.

The boat moves slowly and steadily. The oldman visualizes the Marlin swimming in the dark. He wonders whether the fish could see anything in the dark depths; he calls his youth. When he could see in the dark as cat sees. His left hand uncramps, thanks to the warmth of the sun and his ceaseless exercise feeling very tired, he thinks of the football match between the Yankees of New York and the Tigers of Detroit. He thinks particularly of the champion player Dimmaggio who endured the pain of the bone spur in his reel and rose to great heights. He recalls his playing the hand game for more than a day continuously against of powerful negro and finally, forcing his hand down and getting the title H Champion or the champion. The oldman's remembrance of his past exploits serves to increase his self-confidence. Just before it gets dark, the oldman catches the dolphin, putting in the line with his left hand, and clubs it to death.

The oldman is full of self-contradictory impulses. He regards the Marlin as his friend and yet wants to kill it. He feels sorry for wishing to kill the beautiful fish. He is happy that beautiful things like the sun, the moon and the stars are safe from man's destructive powers. The fish could have sped away, but being stupid, it never does so. The oldman realizes the need to sleep well as otherwise he might become 'unclear in the hear'. With his knife the oldman cuts off the flesh of the dolphin from head to tail and then throws the carcass overboard. He eats half of one of the dolphin from head to tail and then throws the carcass overboard. He eats half of one of the dolphin fillets and one of the flying fish and goes to sleep, holding the line of the marlin tight in his right hand. He dreams of lions roaming on a yellow beach. Suddenly his right fist jerks and he wakes up and finds the Marlin jumping and brusing the ocean. It jumps several times and fills the sacs along its quack with air. It begins to circle. The

oldman pulls in the line steadily and gently, thus narrowing down the Marlin's circle. In a few hours, the fish comes close to the skiff and plunging his harpoon into the fish's side. Just behind its great chest the oldman kills it. Then begin the 'slave work' of tying the dead Marlin to the skiff.

Using a piece of line Santiago ties together the jaws of the Marlin so that its mouth cannot open; then the Marlin is tied to the skiff. It is well past noon and Santiago starts sailing back home. He is overwhelmed by a sense of guilt. He feels it wrong to have killed the Marlin which did not do him any harm. He assuages his guilty feeling by saying that his destruction of the marlin had a purpose behind it. He killed the Marlin to feed himself and others. The oldman also argues that, as a fisherman, he is born to kill, just as the fish is born to be killed. Also, he feels that everything in this world is a sin and that everything kills everything else. An absolutely sinless life is not possible.

The homeward trip is beset with dangers. The Marlin is attached by a stream of sharks. Santiago kills the first shark with his harpoon. As the shark sinks with the harpoon stuck up in its body, the oldman now determines to use his oars, club and tiller as weapons. He does succeed in killing some sharks with his club and tiller. But the club is seized and the tiller is splintered by sharks. So Santiago has no more weapons to fight with. The sharks have eaten up all the flesh of the Marlin. Nothing but its skeleton is left. It is night when Santiago sails into the harbor. He is very tired. With great difficulty, he carries the most to his shack.

The next morning, Manolin finds the oldman sleeping on his bed face down and arms stretched and palm turned up. The boy is moved to tears to find the oldman's miserable state. He brings him coffee from the Terrace. After the oldman drinks it, the boy goes out to bring him food and a clean shirt. The boy expresses his desire to go out with the oldman to fish. He does not believe that the oldman is unlucky. The boy assures that his own luck would compensate for the oldman's lack of it. He further promises to get ready a knife and other equipments necessary for fishing.

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3. He killed the
marlin to ____

On the beach, some tourists are talking about the huge size of the marlin's skeleton. They mistake it for that of a shark. They do not know anything about the agony experienced by the oldman who is fast asleep in his shack, dreaming about the lions. His dream shows that his valour and adventurous spirit are unextinguished.

10.7 Character Sketches

10.7.1 Santiago

Santiago is an old fisherman; fishing is the ruling passion of his life. He has not caught any fish for eighty four days. Still he has not given up hopes. Egged on by the boy Manolin, the oldman sets out for the eighty fifth time.

What makes Santiago unique is his power of observation. He has closely observed the habits of fishes of different kinds. He says that logger-heads are stupid and that porpoise make lone by enticing strange sounds. He talks of the male Marlin allowing its female partner to eat first. When the female got caught, the male tried in vain to protect it. He notices the phosphorescent colour of weeds with as much fondness as he does the lavender colour of the dead marlin's tail. He sees sea-water touched by sunlight emitting strange colours like a prism.

Santiago has a loving attitude towards all natural objects. He regards the Marlin as his brother and the bird which rests on his line as his friend. Yet he cannot help but destroy the fish. When he eats he pities the starving Marlin and wants to supply food to it. He admires the huge size and poise displayed by the fish. Yet he wants to prove his will and intelligence and superiority to the fish by killing it.

After killing the marlin, Santiago is overwhelmed by remorse. He thinks it a sin to have killed the marlin which has not done him any harm. Yet he tries to justify his act by saying that everything kills everything in this world.

Santiago has amazing powers of endurance. He survives on the sea by eating tuna and shrimps. He is bored with eating. He eats the tuna not out of liking but out of necessity, to strengthen himself to fight against the marlin. The only thing he likes is water which he carries in a bottle. Santiago is fearless. Alone and unarmed, he fights

against most ferocious sharks. He lashes a knife to an oar and plunges it into a shark's brain and kills it. When the knife snaps, he uses his small club as a weapon. In the dark he blindly wields the club and beats some sharks to death. The sharks have eaten up all the flesh.

Hemingway shows his admiration for Santiago by associating him with Christ. Seeing sharks coming in groups Santiago is grief stricken. His hopes of taking home the marlin are shattered. He cries 'Ay' in the manner similar to the cry of Christ when crucified; the marlin and the sharks represent the evil that Christ fought against.

10.7.2 Manolin

Manolin is deeply attached to Santiago in spite of the disparity between them. All the fisherman shun Santiago as an unlucky man. They think that, as he has not caught any fish for eighty four days he has lost all his efficiency and must netine. Only Manolin believes that Santiago is still capable of action and can rise to unprecedented heights. It is only because of parental compulsion that Manolin left Santiago and served under some other master considered lucky enough to catch fish everyday.

Manolin behaves like Santiago and meets all his needs. When the oldman returns home empty-handed on the eighty-fourth day, Manolin does not allow him to brood over his failure. He diverts the oldman's attention by taking him to the restaurant, the *Terrace* and playing him with coffee. He knows that the oldman has nothing to eat, even though the latter claims that he has yellow rice and fish curry. So Manolin spends money out of his pocket and buys him a sumptuous meal. Also, he spends his money to buy baits to be used by the oldman on the following day. He wishes the oldman good luck as he slides his boat into the sea. The oldman badly misses Manolin when he is alone at sea. When his left hand is cramped, he thinks of the boy Manolin would massage his hand and loosen his fingers. When sharks come in succession, the oldman again thinks of the boy who would have been of invaluable help in such critical moments.

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4. Santiago has not caught any fish for _____ days.

When the oldman returns empty handed on the eighty fifth day also and goes to sleep with his lacerated palms turned up, the boy looks at his wounds and is moved to tears. He spends money out of his pocket now also to buy him food. To boost him, Manolin proposes to get him a strong knife and, as soon as his wounds heal, go with him on fishing expeditions. Santiago goes to sleep peacefully, dreaming of lions, because Manolin's love and sympathy will never fail him.

10.8 The happenings before the eighty-fifth trip starts

Santiago is an old fisherman, fishing in the Gulf stream. He is more than seventy years old. He has been going to sea for eighty-four days without catching any fish. But he is not at all disheartened. His eyes express his optimism and undying hopefulness. A small boy by name Manolin is his most intimate companion. But he has been forced by his father to leave the unlucky Santiago and serve under someother fisherman who manages to catch fish everyday. But the bond between Santiago and Manolin is too strong to be broken by parental pleasure.

After Santiago returns home empty-handed on the eighty-fourth day, Manolin does many things to cheer him up. He takes him to a restaurant and buys him a beer. When the oldman says that he has yellow rice and fish curry to eat the boy knows that it is a lie. So he buys a sumptuous dinner for the oldman. Seeing the latter in torn clothe, the boy decides to spend some money out of his pocket and buys a new outfit for the oldman. As Santiago is exhausted and penniless, Manolin gets him some sardines and baits for tomorrow's fishing expedition.

Santiago goes to sleep peacefully because all his needs have been met by the boy. At night Santiago dreams of African lions playing on beaches like cats. In the dream, he even smells the smell of Africa that the land breeze brings early morning. He wakes up and shivering with the morning cold, goes to Manolin's house to wake him. The boy is sleeping without trousers. Santiago sits by his side in the dim moonlight and lifts his leg and holds it until he wakes up. There is something unnatural and indecent about his holding the boy's leg. Santiago evidently feels guilty and apologizes to the boy but the latter shrugs it off, saying 'it is what a man must do.'

Santiago is bored with eating. He never carries any food with him. All that he takes with him is a bottle of water. He wishes the oldman good luck. Santiago rows out of the harbour in the dark, hearing the splashing sound made by other fishermen's rowing.

The opening part of the novel thus throws light on the intimacy between the boy and the oldman and the latter's undying interests in fishing. The mention of Santiago's urinating, soon after getting up from bed and his lifting the sleeping Manolin's leg is an example of this. Also, there are circumstantial descriptions of fisherman cutting sharks to strips for salting and processing marlins and exploring them to Havana. In addition, we see Hemingway's faint identification of Santiago with Christ in the opening section, as he draws attention to the pictures of Christ in Santiago's shack. Santiago's dreaming of African lions is another symbolic touch, bringing out his inexhaustible vigour and virility and courage.

10.9 Santiago's skill in catching the Marlin

The novel *The Oldman and the Sea* is about the old man's heroic efforts to catch a giant-sized marlin and his disappointing experience after catching it. For eighty-four days old Santiago has not caught any fish. Still, without yielding to despair, the oldman sails out for the eighty-fifth time. He takes with him only a bottle of water, as he is bored with eating. The first day of the trip is quite uneventful. He sees varieties of birds and fishes. He crosses a place called the deep well which is seven hundred fathoms deep and full of fish of various kinds. At night flying fish jump out of water. He notices schools of stupid looking logger-heads. A lot of tuna are seen jumping about in all directions. One tuna falls into the skiff. Santiago clubs it to death and intends to eat it the next morning.

The oldman throws three lines with baits attached to them, hoping that at least one bait would be bitten by a fish towards night fall one of the lines is pulled gently. The oldman who has a thorough knowledge of the habits of fish easily guesses that a marlin must be eating the Sardines attached to a line at a depth of one hundred fathoms or six hundred feet. He decides to eat the tuna the next morning to derive

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5. Santiago clubs _____ to death and intends to eat it the next morning.

enough strength the struggle with the marlin. The marlin is untired. It keeps swimming, dragging the skiff with it.

Santiago is a bundle of contradictions. He calls the marlin his brother and yet has a compulsive desire to kill it and proved his worth. He decides to say ten our fathers and our Marys go on a pilgrimage to the shrine of Mary if he succeeds in killing the marlin. He thinks of the greatness of the football player, Dimaggio who won many matches despite his defective heel. The oldman is at a disadvantage because his left hand is cramped. He wants to achieve great things just like Dimaggio who was not unnerved by his bone problem. Santiago also thinks of his hand with a muscular negro whose hand he bent down to the table with great difficulty. The oldman recalls these exploits in order to gain enough self-confidence to face the marlin. He goes to sleep, holding the line in his right fist. He dreams of African lions on a yellow beach a sight which thrilled him in his boyhood.

Suddenly his right hand jerk; he wakes up and finds the marlin jumping again and again. The oldman acts calmly. He does not give into panic. He pulls in the line little by little, forcing the marlin to narrow down its circle. The stupid marlin comes close to skiff. Santiago penetrates the fish with his harpoon and kills it. His next task is to tie it to the skiff and take it home. It is the job of a slave and Santiago has to do that work also.

10.10 Santiago returning home

Santiago kills the marlin on the third day of the trip. There is a good deal of dull drudgery for him to do now. He calls it's lame work. He pulls the skiff up to the marlin which, dead, is wallowing in the sea. The fish cannot be taken into the skiff, as it is much bigger than the skiff. He passes the harpoon rope through the fish's gills and out of its jaws and, turning around its sword and bill, fastens it to the bitt in the bow. By this time the fish has lost its original purple and its broad strips get a pale violet colour. Its eyes look as detached as the mirrors in a periscope or as a saint in a procession. After tying the fish's lower jaw with a piece of line, the oldman sails south-west. He feels hungry as the sardines are rotten in the yellow Gulf weed and,

pinching off their heads, eats them with relish. He drinks a little water from the bottle to refresh himself.

While struggling with the marlin, the oldman used to think that it was all a dream. But with his hands and back aching and with the fish neatly tied up in the skiff, the oldman realizes that it is not at all a dream. But he is assailed by many doubts now. First, he begins to feel that it is the fish that has subdued him. His obsession has turned him into a slave killing the fish and dragging it home, he has lost all his independence. Second, he begins to feel that he has committed a grave sin, killing the fish that meant him no harm. He thinks of several points to evade his pricking conscience. He feels that an absolutely sincere life is impossible in this world. 'Everything is a sin' and everything kills everything else in some way.'

Santiago could defend himself by saying that he killed the fish to feed himself and others. Also, as a fisherman, he had the right to kill. The fisherman is born to kill just as the fish is born to be killed. At the same time, he realizes that he killed the fish not only to eat it or make money out of it but mainly to satisfy his overweening pride. Thus the oldman is puzzled by many unanswerable conundrums. Doubts attaching to the oldman coincide with sharks attacking the marlin. A very big male shark, equipped with eight rows of razor sharp teeth, is the first to attack. It is a most ferocious creature built to feed on all the fishes in the sea. But the oldman is not frightened. He is full of resolution. He is quite confident of killing the shark, he says hopefully, 'Bad luck to your mother'. The shark bites the marlin with its 'clicking, thrusting, all swallowing' mouth. The oldman rams his harpoon down into the shark's head at a spot where its brain is located. The shark, fatally hit, ploughs over the water like a speed-boat, lashing the water with its tail. It swings over twice, the rope looping it. It lays quietly on the water for a little while and then, completely dead, goes down slowly, with the harpoon stuck up in its body.

The oldman is very sad not only because he has lost the only weapon he had but mainly because the shark has bitten forty pounds of flesh off the marlin's body. When he hit the Marlin, the oldman felt as though he himself had been hit. Another problem facing him is that the bleeding marlin might attract many more sharks. The

oldman feels frustrated. He wishes that it were all a dream and that he had never killed the marlin and was in bed on the newspapers. But this dejection does not last long. Hope springs up once again in his heart. He says that man can be destroyed but not defeated. He is now prepared to take life as it comes. Though he has lost his harpoon, he can lash his knife to the butt of one of his oars and use it as a weapon to repulse sharks. He sails along for two hours. When he is about to rest, he sees two sharks ('galamos') advancing. These shovel-nosed sharks are blood thirsty creatures which, when hungry, bite at an oar or a rudder and do not hesitate to cut off sleeping turtle 'legs and flippers or to hit a man in the water even if he has no smell of fish blood or of fish slime on him.'

The oldman is simply panicked at the sight of the sharks and cries 'Ay' which sounds like the cry which Christ might have made when crucified. Unafraid, he faces the sharks. One of them hides under the skiff and tries to bite the marlin from beneath it. The skiff is shaken up by it. The other shark, opening its semi-circular jaws wide, tries to bite the marlin where it has already been bitten. The oldman drives the knife attached to the oar into the shark's brain and then withdraw it and plunge it into the shark's yellow cat-like eyes. The shark lets go of the fish and slides down dead. Tackling the other fish is more difficult. Though stabbed in the left eye, it hangs on to the marlin. The oldman thrusts the knife first into the shark's brain and then into its jaws. The shark slides loose at last and sinks dead, to join its friend or may be its mother. The sharks had bitten off a quarter of the Marlin's fish.

The oldman feels sorry for having killed the marlin. For only sharks are benefited by it. He says that he should not have gone out so far to fish. The next shark that comes is also shovel-nosed. It comes like a pig to the trough. Its mouth is so wide that one can put one's head into it. When the oldman pushes the knife into its brain, the shark dies at once and rolls over. This breaks the knife blade. Even now the oldman does not despair. He has two oars, a tiller and a club. He says that he will continue to fight as long he has three things. Next come pair of galances. The oldman maims them badly with his club. However, they move away only after consuming a sizeable part of the marlin as the sun goes down.

The oldman sails on, determined to fight, even if sharks in the night. He regrets having come so far. Only the front part of the marlin remains. Even this may be ruined before he reaches home. He sees the lights of Havana around ten O'clock at night. The wind grows rough. The oldman feels utterly exhausted. His entire body is aching. At night sharks come in a pack. A fierce battle ensues in the dark. The oldman beats a shark with the club. The shark seizes the club and woves away. Next the oldman arms himself with the tiller and beats a shark which swallows the Marlin's head. The tiller gets broken. The oldman thrusts the sharp spiraled edge of the tiller into the shark and kills it. Now the Marlin is completely ruined. Only its backbone and the bones of its head and tail are left. The oldman is embittered. He spits into the oceans and says 'Eat that, galanos'.

The oldman thinks that the sharks have killed him. His mind is completely blank now. He has no thoughts or feelings now. In the night, many more sharks come and eat what little flesh the marlin has. The oldman does not bother anymore, as there is nothing to lose. He longs for rest. He considers bed his only friend. 'Bed will be a great thing' he says. It is dark when he sails into the harbour. Getting down from the boat, he shoulders the mast and walks home. He is so very tired that he sits down five times before reaching his shack.

10.11 Summation

Hemingway uses symbols in his novel 'The Oldman and the Sea'. In Santiago's story the reader is to detect the struggles of Hemingway, his determination and his literary vicissitudes. The Fisherman is the writer, the sea his craft, the gulf stream is time, the voyage is soul's journey, his struggle with the fish is the struggle between good and evil. The message is "man is not made for defeat, a man can be destroyed, but not defeated." Ultimately Santiago embodies the essential nobility of human striving.

10.12 Answers to CYP Questions

1. lions

2. marlin

3. to feed himself and others

10.13 Questions

1. Discuss Ernest Hemingway as a novelist.
2. Is there any symbolism in Hemingway's 'The Oldman and the Sea'?

10.14 For Further Reading

Ernest Hemingway's *The Oldman and the Sea*: Notes Longman literature guides:
Kenneth Graham

The Oldman and the Sea: Atlantic Critical Study - P.G.Rama Rao

III Year Non-Semester B.A. English Literature

Question Paper Pattern

Paper – V American Literature

Section – A

Detailed Text

I. Annotate any Five of the following, choosing atleast Two from each group:

Group – A

5 x 4 = 20

Five passages to be given from Detailed Poetry alone.

Group – B

Five passages to be given from Detailed Prose and Drama.

II. Two essays to be answered out of Five questions from Detailed Poetry, Prose and Drama

2 x 20 = 40

Section – B

Non-Detailed Text

III. Two essays to be answered out of Five questions from Non-detailed Poetry, Drama and Fiction

2 x 20 = 40

MODEL QUESTION PAPER

8139/N31

May 2012

Paper V – American Literature

(For those who joined in July 2003 and after)

Time: Three hours

Maximum: 100 marks

SECTION A – (5 X 4 = 20)

1. Annotate FIVE of the following passages choosing at least Two from each group:

GROUP – A

1. Leave now black plume as a token of that lie thy sone hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken! Quit the bust above my door!

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!

2. Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor dead,

Over my mood stealing and spreading they come,

Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

3. Before I built a wall I'd ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,

And to whom I was like to give offence.

4. And then a plank in Reason, broke,

And dropped down, and down –

And hit a world, at every plunge,

And finishing knowing – then –

5. And I had put away

My labour and my leisure too,

For His civility.

GROUP B

6. Books are the best type of the influence of the past, and perhaps we shall get at the truth – learn the amount of this influence more conveniently – by considering their value alone.

7. Character is higher than intellect. Thinking is the function. Living is the functionary. The stream retreat to its source. A great soul will be strong to live, as well as strong to think.

8. Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit! Only animals have to satisfy instincts! Surely your aims are somewhat higher than theirs!

9. Little articles of it, they're ornaments mostly!

Most of them are little animals made out of glass, the tiniest little animals in the world.

10. I descended the steps of this fire-escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father's footstep, attempting to find in motion what was lost in space –

SECTION B – (2 X 20 = 40 marks)

II. Answer any TWO of the following questions in about 500 words each:

11. How according to Emerson, does nature influence the scholar?

12. Bring out the mystic tone of Whitman's "Passage to India."

13. Discuss Dickinson's minute description of the bird in "A Bird Came Down the Walk."

14. Comment on the atmosphere of melancholy in Poe's "The Raven".

15. How does Laura Wingfield recede into the broken world of music and glass figures in "The Glass Menagerie"?

SECTION – C (2 X 20 = 40 marks)

III. Answer TWO of the following questions in about 500 words each:

16. What are the constructive and positive features of Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience"?
17. Summarise James's remarks on the art of fiction.
18. How does Robert Lowell present the American society in "Walking in the Blue"?
19. How far is Willy Loman a tragic character in "Death of a Salesman"?
20. Consider Santiago a man of endurance and suffering incarnate.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER - II

8139/N31

November 2012

Paper V – American Literature

(For those who joined in July 2003 and after)

Time: Three hours

Maximum: 100 marks

SECTION A – (5 X 4 = 20)

I. Annotate FIVE of the following passages choosing at least Two from each group:

GROUP – A

1. Whether Temper sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore

Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert Land enchanted

on this home by Horror haunted – tell me truly – I implore.

2. Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.

Not you alone proud truth of the world.

Nor you alone be facets of modern science.

3. I could say 'elves' to him,

But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather

He said it for himself.

4. He kindly stopped for me –

The carriage held but just ourselves –

And Immortality.

5. He glanced with rapid eyes

That hurried all round –

Tray looked like frightened beads, I thought.

GROUP B

6. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the conscious to the conscious is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived.
7. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, - the act of thought, - is instantly transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man.
8. My callers were gentlemen – all! Among my callers were some of the prominent young planters of Mississippi Delta – Planters and sons of Planters.
9. People are not so dreadful when you know them. That's what you have to remember! And everybody has problems, not just you, but practically everybody has got same problems.
10. I didn't go to the moon, I went much further – for time is the longest distance between two places – Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe box.

SECTION B – (2 X 20 = 40 marks)

II. Answer any TWO of the following questions in about 500 words each:

11. What, according to Emerson, are the duties of a scholar?
12. Examine the different stages of experience in "I Felt a Funeral in my Brain."
13. How does Whitman bring out his mystic faith in "Passage to India"?
14. Comment on the gloomy atmosphere in Poe's "The Raven".
15. Analyse the nostalgic feelings of Tom in The Glass Menagerie.

SECTION – C (2 X 20 = 40 marks)

III. Answer TWO of the following questions in about 500 words each:

16. Sum up Thoreau's arguments in "Civil Disobedience."

17. Explain the poetic principles that Poe discusses in "The Philosophy of Composition."

18. Comment on the central theme of Stevens' poem "Emperor of Ice Cream".

19. How far is Willy Loman a victim of the great American dream in Death of a Salesman.

20. Analyse the stoic endurance of Santiago in The Oldman and the Sea.

